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The Saturday Review of Literature

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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Place and Literature

ONE of the interesting phases of American writing that has not as yet attracted general attention is the fact that with the rise to predominance of the psychological novel nature and landscape have been constantly growing of less importance to narrative. They play their rôle, to be sure, but as background, not as an investing element, and they are used to give the key to character and mood rather than as ends in themselves. Our older writers felt it incumbent upon them to depict landscape as a distinct and recurrent feature of their chronicle, and we got as a result such pages of portrayal as Cooper indulged in in his Leatherstocking Tales. Today, description in the form in which he used it has almost disappeared from our literature, for an impatient generation has made short shrift of accessories to plot or analysis.

It is remarkable, indeed, how detached is the common American attitude toward nature. Emotion of the kind that is traditional in English letters has never as yet to any extent made its entrance into our writing. That attachment to locality, and romantic love of the familiar countryside, which have invested the British Isles with glamour and transmogrified the Wye or the Dee, Loch Lomond or Snowden, from mere river or lake or mountain into landscape teeming with significance, has found small reflection in our prose or poetry. It is in truth amazing that the American, with his intense love of country, and his sharp loyalty to section, should have developed sentiment for the immediate aspects of his land so little. He has admiration for its mountain ranges, exultance in its water-courses, a grudging liking for the monotony of its plains, but that tenderness for its gentler aspects that in the Englishman clothes in romance the pleasing as well as the grand he far more rarely knows. Perhaps, in the light of his history, it is but natural that this should be so.

* * *

For if in his present good fortune nature affords a vast playground to the American, in his past he has wrestled with it and suffered much from its power. Round about the colonizing American a virgin continent flung magnificence on all sides, but all too often a magnificence that cloaked danger and disaster. In the early days of its settlement rivers might be beautiful but they were means of attack; forests might be superb but they hid the Indian terror; meadows and valleys, peaceful though they seemed, lay ever open to surprise from the savages. And later when the Indian menace had passed, and the young nation had turned to the west, rivers became barricades to advance, prairies were tests of endurance, forests were hazards to be overcome. Nature was magnificent, but it was challenging, curbing, something to be fought and downed. And now, when at last tractor, and railroad, and bridge have tamed the wild, the American restlessness, born of its pioneer experience, sees in field or forest not release for its mind but for its body, and regards their beauties as setting for sport or holiday-making rather than as a stay for the spirit. Its genesis might well lead it so to do.

The nature which the Englishman has glorified in his literature, and which glorifies it, is a nature which speaks tranquillity and security. It is the dear companion of his contemplative hours whose intimacy, and brooding peacefulness, and solacing quiet have shaped him as he has immortalized them. The American needs more distance from his past, deeper roots in his soil, less passing from one part of his territory to another, to develop a similar romantic reverence for his countryside. He has the eye for beauty, but his heart is still questing adventure, not twining itself upon the small, familiar things that mean rest after strife. And his literature, therefore, is still in the main unenriched by that sort of allusion which imbues locality with significance, and in turn wins connotativeness from place.

Worthy of Atlas

By GEORGE O'NEIL

CHAMPING at the burnished sedge,
A crimson bullock tracks
Noon across the cliff.
Glittering and stiff,
The beach's margin cracks
Golden, hit with a ringing sledge.

Hawks are on the stony ledge
And bees are at our wrists.
Vigilantly, thistles
Opening their bristles,
In purple matted twists
Have burred the earth upon the air.

Hugely prodding in the glare,
Atlas sweats above us now;
Copper loins and agate brow
All knotted like the ram.
Towering, vertiginous,
With a universe to bear,
Hot attention in his stare
Proves he is not tired of us
Who search the winking diagram.

This Week

"Main Currents in American Thought." Reviewed by *Henry Seidel Canby.*

"The Myth of the Individual." Reviewed by *Joseph J. Jastrow.*

"Collected Parodies." Reviewed by *Lee Wilson Dodd.*

"Trader Horn." Reviewed by *Allan Nevins.*

"Wild Goslings." Reviewed by *David McCord.*

"Chains." Reviewed by *Gorham B. Munson.*

"People Around the Corner." Reviewed by *Amabel Williams-Ellis.*

"To the Lighthouse." Reviewed by *Zona Gale.*

The Folder. By *Christopher Morley.*

Next Week, or Later

"The Rise of American Civilization." Reviewed by *Albert Jay Nock.*

Perennial Romanticism

By ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES

ROMANTICISM, after being a battle-cry, then a term of eulogy, then a mere literary classification, has ended by becoming a word of most opprobrious implications. Long ago Mr. William Crary Brownell demonstrated that Poe, our own beloved romantic, could write neither prose nor poetry. About the same time George Santayana annihilated Browning and Whitman. Later came the terrible Irving Babbitt uprooting the whole crew, lock, stock, and barrel, with such magnificent eloquence and logic that even in the solitude of one's own chamber one could hardly open his Shelley, much less his Alfred de Musset, without blushing. Of the two leading contemporary American critics, the late Stuart Sherman and H. L. Mencken could agree on nothing save their mutual scorn of romanticism. The case seems hopeless. Indeed the odious nature of all things romantic is taken for granted in current conversation. If a man calls you "a damned realist," you know that he is expressing a sneaking admiration and you take him out to dinner, but if he calls you "a damned romanticist," well, you adopt other methods.

One can hardly fail to sympathize with much of this attitude. Faced with the enormous unrealities of the American movies or the American clergy—who divide the dregs of romanticism between them—one is likely to whoop it up for Sinclair Lewis and John Dos Passos. Since beauty is out of the question, it is better to have unlovely truth than unlovely falsehood. "Life is real," once sagely remarked an American poet. He was quite right. Only—what is reality? Is it something to be observed, ready-made, or is our reality, at least, conditioned by what we bring to it? However that may be, it remains true, in spite of the Babbitts, George and Irving, that every year some of our best books continue disturbingly romantic in character. "Thunder on the Left" was a case in point a year ago, and the volumes of Cabell, Moore, and Eddison about to be discussed raised the same issue later.

* * *

Now a romanticist, by hypothesis, is a low fellow, a coward, a liar, and a profligate. Instead of trying to make the crooked straight and save us from our sins, he runs away from the problem into the world of his imagination where he may disport himself at his own sweet will. I am not concerned to defend him from this charge. I think it largely true. The typical romanticist avoids the company of facts, cares nothing for conventional moralities, and is more eager to escape from the world than to improve it. All I would say is that his mood is precisely the matrix for one kind of great art. Beauty is not a thing of fact, it is a thing of inner harmony, and when the world intrudes too harshly upon his inner harmony, the poet will always flee the world into the recesses of his own dreams. The world is bad; we are all agreed on that, romanticist and realist alike. But the realist prefers to stay in the world and fight, deriving a saturnine satisfaction from the spectacle of its rottenness. He is a tough soul, muscular, and at his worst brutal. The romanticist is tender, nervous, and at his worst soft. Which any one will turn out to be depends upon the relation between the demands of his temperament and the returns offered by the environment. If his demands are great and the returns few, romanticism will always be the result.

No doubt an ivory tower is an unsafe residence. One must reach his ladders to the ground somehow.

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The worth of the romanticist's achievement like all others will depend in the last analysis upon its relevance to human life. But love is as relevant as hunger, ideals are as relevant as facts, what we are not is as relevant as what we are. And those low fellows, the Villons and Verlaines of past and future, may give us more than any pious Boileau or Bossuet of the whole classical outfit, and may give us as much as any sardonic Flaubert or whoever will take Flaubert's place as the next last word in realism. And without being either Villon or Verlaine there are several contemporary writers in that school whose works have about the best chance of longevity of any now being produced.

James Branch Cabell is so good a romanticist as hardly to be a romanticist at all. In so far as dream and desire, hope and fear, are adolescent qualities, he has outgrown them. In "Beyond Life," his earlier defence of romanticism and himself, there is some confusion. In his later apologia, "Straws and Prayer-Books," he knew exactly where he stood. Two almost universal follies he has wittingly abjured: the reading of the world in terms of one's desires, and the reading of one's desires in terms of the world. Man and nature do not form a single harmonious whole; they belong to two largely uncongenial orders. Facts go their way and laugh at us. We—we can hardly go our way, but we can at least laugh. Whether such laughter will seem idiotic or sublime will probably depend upon whether we are personally addicted to it.

The peculiarity of Mr. Cabell is that he sympathizes almost equally with each order. Man seems to him a crazy fool to strive to realize himself in the face of overwhelming odds, and a bumptious fool when he pretends to have attained his aim, and yet in other moods he cannot fail to admire the courage of the procedure or to admit that the animal does sometimes unaccountably lift himself by the bootstraps of his own ideals. Poised thus delicately between moral idealism and materialism, Mr. Cabell shoots the arrows of his wit in both directions and pierces us, a little unfairly perhaps, whichever way we turn. His philosophy is a philosophy of the moment. He shifts it, as a good skeptic should, with each new object of attack. But there is always a philosophy there. He is the one philosophical writer in American letters since Whitman, and—again since Whitman—the bawdiest. What the connection may be, I leave to philosophers to discover.

* * *

The début of the John Day Company as a publishing house with Cabell's "The Music from Behind the Moon"* could hardly have been more auspicious. The book is attractively gotten up and the wood engravings by Leon Underwood are as fascinating as the text. The latter is Cabell with a difference. He has temporarily deserted his well-trod Poictesme, localized vaguely to be sure but at least somewhere on the map of Europe, withdrawn us from the circle of Dom Manuel, and led us to an even more indeterminate portion of the earth. Here Madoc the singer, having once heard the skirling of Ettarre's music from behind the moon, is henceforth discontented with all sublunar things; he tries to still his longing with various substitutes, terrestrial women and terrestrial songs of patriotism and philanthropy, but to no avail; eventually he wins to the moon and gains Ettarre, with the inevitable Cabellian aftermath, a life of prose on earth only flashing back into poetry at the end after Ettarre's death.

What, precisely, does "The Music from Behind the Moon" mean? What, precisely, does Browning's Dark Tower mean? Or Ibsen's Great Boyg? The symbolism is sufficiently transparent if one does not demand a definition. Among other things, it shadows forth the very life of romanticism with its alternations of longing, attainment, and renewed longing, its perennial dying and perennial rebirth, —which is one of the most constant of Mr. Cabell's themes.

In fact, this writer might justifiably be reproached were it not for two things. In the first place, the varied play of incident and picture produce a perpetual novelty of detail. In the second place, the repetition of theme is deliberate, a part of the author's usually successful endeavor to produce a sense of eternity—as if one held the key of a plot perpetually reenacted down the ages. Insofar as human history presents that aspect, and it undoubtedly does so to a large extent, Mr. Cabell's work is a profound interpretation of reality.

But "The Music from Behind the Moon" is in one respect a rather startling reversion to Mr. Cabell's earlier manner, so startling as to suggest that it may have been written some time ago. While in all his later works he has traveled steadily toward a more rational, less emotional, attitude toward life, coming to terms with it not in the sense of accepting it but in the sense of being amused rather than hurt by it, here he returns to play upon those strings of pathos which he once so dearly loved and has latterly neglected. But the pathos is real, not mawkish; like nearly everything which Mr. Cabell does, it is well done.

For the rest, the usual tricksiness and whimsicality are present. Nothing in any of this author's works is more delightful than the way in which Madoc turns back the course of time 584 years by the simple expedient of inserting a decimal point in the calendar of the Norns. Open the book anywhere and you could recognize the author by the style. Following Paley's famous watch argument, if one found on a desert island these two sentences, for example, he would know that James Branch Cabell had been there.

> Thereafter he sat beside the fountain meditatively disposing of his allotted portion of thin wine and of two cheese-sandwiches. A woman came to him, white-limbed and like a living mist in that twilight.

And yet it is anything but a monotonous style, for these two other sentences are equally characteristic:

> If there be any music coming from behind the moon it echoes faintlier than does the crackling of the hearth-fire, it is drowned by the piping voices of our children. We—being human—may pause to listen now and then, half wistfully, it may be, for an unrememberable cadence which only the young hear: yet we, hearing nothing, are not wholly discontent; and common decency forbids one to disturb the home-circle (as that blundering Lamech did, you will remember) by crying out, "I have slain a young man to my hurt!"

* * *

To turn from Cabell to George Moore is like turning from champagne to sherry. The former is all sparkle, the latter all mellowness. Where Cabell's medievalism is an entirely new creation, superbly insolent, borrowing only its trappings from the past—something that a laborious scholar like Maurice Hewlett never could forgive—George Moore's medievalism is an attempted recreation of an actual past. This is, of course, impossible of attainment, but if he does not give us the real medieval world now gone forever he does give us a world which is at least redolent of that vanished past, such as the Temple gardens, while far enough from medievalism today, still seem shadowed and heavy with its memory.

"Peronnik the Fool"** was originally written as a part of "Heloise and Abelard"—the story told by Heloise to her little boy out of Brittany to revive his failing remembrance of the French tongue. The author finally eliminated it from the volume lest it distract attention from the main story. To complain of such unwonted auctorial abnegation may seem ungenerous, but the complaint must be made. Anyone who has come to know and love George Moore's Heloise must feel that this charmingly naïve tale of the so-called fool who wins the dangerous quest where all the knights have failed, with its pious miracles, its quaint pedantries, its obvious moral lessons, its countless tokens of the gentle heart and character of the story-teller, was in very truth the tale which Heloise told her little boy out of Brittany. It is hers, it belongs to her; it is much too frail and tender a thing to be out alone in the hubbub and hurly-burly of modern letters. Restitution to Heloise should be made in the next edition of the great romance.

George Moore is an interesting example of the way in which genius can be thwarted by environment. He was marked for romanticism at birth. No one born in Ireland can be otherwise. And the title of his early "Confessions of a Young Man" tells the same tale. No young man can actually confess anything—partly because he has nothing to confess and partly because he wouldn't confess it if he had. It would be absurd to suppose that anyone can tell the truth about himself before he is fifty—if then. But in George Moore's youth the romantic thing was to be realistic, so this later Gautier tried to make himself into a Goncourt and out-Herod Herod. For years he offered his ultra-realistic works to an unbelieving public—rightly unbelieving, because the author's genius, smothered under the material he forced upon it, presented the appearance of mere laborious and conscientious talent. Only at an age when most authors have done their best work, did he abandon his too faithful allegiance to fact, take Sidney's advice, look in his heart and write. Since then, the long realistic training has stood in good stead as a servant him whom it had almost ruined as a master. If George Moore came late to the banquet, when he arrived it was to take a comfortable seat near the head of the table.

To revive the Vikings today is an even harder task than to revive troubadour and scholastic. The romanticism of the North was of a different cast from that which we usually call by that name. It was indeed a literature of imagination rather than that of fact but of imagination playing over fact and, by preference, over violent and brutal fact. Despite the genius of William Morris, the numerous excellent translations of Scandinavian classics, and all the demands of racial loyalty, our Viking heritage is still of little moment in our literature as compared with the classical or medieval tradition. The reason for this becomes clear from a reading of Mr. Eddison's "Styrbiorn the Strong"*** even though it be as good a book as one can meet upon a winter's day.

Mr. Eddison has caught the very spirit of the sagas, has written a book in the heroic style: one rejoices in it as does the traditional war-horse at the smell of battle. To be free from the pettiness and decadence of modernity, to go a-harrying with Styrbiorn, to exchange ringing blows and taste the salt of swirling seas, to fight greatly, eat greatly, drink greatly, and occasionally love greatly—what better moral holiday for sickly consciences and jaded stomachs? Yet after all, a holiday is only a holiday. The saga for us cannot be more. Its mould is too narrow, too inflexible; it is diamond-hard, without concession; its interests cannot be expanded without destroying the pattern. Mr. Eddison has rigorously hewn to the mark, deliberately keeping to well-known saga types of character and theme:—the Sigurd-like Styrbiorn,—Sigrid, cruel, lustful, and of compelling comeliness, "born to be the bane of men,"—the gentle child-wife Thyri. Out of this traditional material he has unquestionably made high if remote tragedy. Yet even he has had difficulty in restraining his lyrical imagination within the bounds of his chosen frame-work. And it is this pervading lyric beauty of style—Norse in spirit, undoubtedly, but with a dozen centuries of post-Viking experience enmeshed in it,—which gives its ultimate quality to the book.

Yet this is perhaps hardly fair either to Mr. Eddison or the Vikings. Deftly interwoven with his story are strands from the Elder Edda so brilliantly translated that one wishes Mr. Eddison would some time undertake the whole poem. Before these one forgets his vicarious Berserker experience; the raging and the shouting, the carousing and the love-making fade into the background. Beyond race and morals is the fate of man which here confronts us starkly.

> Dark is on the sunshine: no summer after:
> All weathers ill weathers.—*Wist ye yet, or what?*

One recognizes the voice of eternal paganism—and before eternal voices one is silent.

The death of Jerome K. Jerome on June 14 removed from the roll of English writers a name that had long been before the public. A railway clerk, actor, newspaper man, teacher, and secretary, his reputation was made in the literary world. Before he was thirty his publication of "On the Stage and Off," "Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow," and "Three Men in a Boat" had won him fame as a humorist. After the success of the last-named book Jerome retired from his secretarial position to devote himself exclusively to writing. In 1892 he commenced publication of two magazines, *The Idler* and *To-Day*, which survived until 1897. During this period and after he published books in rapid succession, novels, essays, plays. Of the last, his most popular work, "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," was issued in 1907. Twenty-two years ago Jerome made a lecture tour through the United States.

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*Music from Behind the Moon. By James Branch Cabell. New York: John Day Company. 1926. $6.

**Peronnik the Fool. By George Moore. New York: William Edwin Rudge. 1926.

***Styrbiorn the Strong. By E. C. Eddison. New York: A. & C. Boni. 1926. $2.

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The American Mind

MAIN CURRENTS IN AMERICAN THOUGHT. The Colonial Mind; The Romantic Revolution in America. Vols. 1 and 2. By VERNON LOUIS PARRINGTON. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1927. $4 a volume.

Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

THIS is a work of the first importance, lucid, comprehensive, accurate as sound scholarship should be, and also challenging, original in its thinking, shrewd, and sometimes brilliant. A subject that could be made good for scholars only, that might be wound in technicalities or lost in tiresome description of tedious mediocrities has been made vividly alive. For however vividly Mr. Parrington ranges whatever puritans, demagogues, mystics, freaks, geniuses, reactionaries, come under his pen—his study is always of the critical moments of conflict where Tory and Liberal clash in the making of a democracy. His book is not a history of literature, although much important American literature, particularly the important American literature that was not *belles lettres,* is levied upon; it is not a history of events, which in these volumes constitute an environment pressing upon the mind; it is a genuine history of ideas, clearly seen, tirelessly followed, admirably analyzed. Indeed it is the book which historians and critics of American literature have been waiting and hoping for.

American histories of literature have so far been written in a kind of intellectual vacuum, where the subject was artificially abstracted from the elements of its environment. Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville have been studied esthetically, with an eye to their parallels, analogues, sources in Europe, and their conventional relationship to possible causes in America. They have been studied as *belles lettres* or philosophers, but not as Americans. The few comprehensive treatises in which the American writer was shown in relation to the active life about him, have been confused or unnaturally simplified. The authors of these studies have known literature, or they have known history, or, more rarely, they have known politics or philosophy, but to put all together and refine the issue has exceeded their powers. Hence our ignorance—no other term is admissible—of the real values in American writing, the undue praise, the undue blame which is characteristic of every critical estimate. Hence the absurd spectacle of certain American universities offering courses in obscure and mediocre authors because they wrote in Kansas or Connecticut, and it is patriotic to teach them, while other, better balanced but equally unilluminated institutions, neglect the great Americans altogether for minor Europeans more readily (to the Federalist or brahmin mind) understood or taught.

What was needed was not a new history of American literature, at least not first of all, but a social history of American backgrounds, an intellectual history of American thinking and American intellectual emotion, and if Mr. Parrington has not given us the first, he has studied it himself. The second he has achieved, and no reader seriously interested in American life as a development, as a possibility, and as an effect of inescapable causes, will fail to read him. There is a shelf full of conventional literary history of America, ignorant opinion, short-sighted generalization, platitude a dozen times repeated, that may be cleared in any American library to make room for this new work. It does not supersede the studies in esthetic criticism; it is not such a study; but it will be indispensable to the pure criticism of the future.

To describe the work:—Mr. Parrington begins with the conflict between conservative and liberal that had its onset with the Mathers of Boston and Roger Williams of Rhode Island. He follows on through the slow turnover, which was more a shift of emphasis than a change of subject, when theology gave way to politics and economics and the cleavage of the Revolution began. He traces the blending influences of government for property from England and government for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" from France, describes the golden age of Virginia's romantic liberalism, which for the first time gets its due place as a source of American literary ideas, recurs to New England and the new Toryism of the Federalists, moves on to the new West where the old struggle changes nature as the frontier populations desire both individualism and the expansive power of the coercive state, and returns to the débâcle of all old enthusiasms caught and crushed by an industrial revolution irresistible as fate. The course of a conflict which, like a moving battle, takes on new aspects with different combatants, but yet in objective remains always the same, is never obscured, but the method of this book is concrete. It is a study of personalities, of men, their character, their desires, their work, prefaced by the briefest of general essays for the guidance of the reader. The individual, not books, nor acts, is the subject, but the resultant of clashing interests, conflicting ideas, diverse temperaments in a common environment, is the theme.

Mr. Parrington is a partisan and his book is a partisan book. It is essentially a history of the warfare for democratic thought. It is as democratic in its prejudices as Macaulay is Whiggish, or Hilaire Belloc is Catholic. The Federalists are usually wrong; the Whigs are ever the enemy; to be an agrarian, particularly a Virginia agrarian is to be right-thinking and intellectually virtuous. Jefferson is a saint, Hamilton a sinner. (Washington whose forte was not the intellect, quite properly scarcely appears). The Calvinists are damned on earth as they damned themselves by pessimistic preference in heaven, and he spends so much energy in attacking them, that he has no time left for the work of the Quakers, which he underestimates. The common sense balance of Pennsylvania, which Henry Adams praised so highly, gets only a word in passing. New England is the enemy except in its rebels. Emerson, Williams, Thoreau; democracy is not only inevitable, it is the single desideratum. Character, culture, benevolence get short shrift unless they are on the right side.

Jacket cover by Gluyas Williams for Christopher Morley's "Translations from the Chinese." (Doubleday, Page).

Well, every good history is partisan. The impartial history is likely to be a collection of uninterpreted facts, which mean nothing until the partisan, with a faith to support, erects them into a theory. We have always had, and we shall continue to have until the next epoch begins, histories of the United States that are either Hamiltonian or Jeffersonian. It is curious that in the years since the War, when political realism has so willingly, in so many countries, sacrificed the possible perfectible man to the immediately successful business, America should have produced so many books in praise of Jefferson and his romantic liberalism. Perhaps it is significant. The middle class monster has opened his jaws. We may at least look back before we are swallowed. Therefore to say that Mr. Parrington's book is inspired by a hot democracy, is anti-Federalist, anti-aristocratic, anti-capitalist, is by no means to condemn it. The writing of American literary history particularly, has been in the hands of the able Federalist or the pedantic dry-as-dust. The best criticism has been Federalist criticism; the conceptions of American ideas, and of American history, in which most of us were educated, are Federalist conceptions. New England educated the United States, and it was the New England of Edwards, of Dwight, of Longfellow, of Lowell that weighed upon the common schools and the colleges and impregnated the American mind with ideas of the sanctity of property, the ethics of conduct, the duty to work which Parker, Emerson, Thoreau flashed over but never undermined.

Therefore the warm side-taking of Mr. Parrington's book is welcome. It is alive, it is human; the struggles of the American mind are not abstract for him, they are vital; and it is the immense importance to him of American idealism which lifts his style, sends his pen ranging with loving care through the opposing arguments, sets the whole scene of two centuries of battle with a care for accuracy, justice, and fair play which only one intensely concerned in the outcome would be capable of. If Mr. Parrington is a writer with a thesis, so were his predecessors in both political and literary history, and he, far more than they, is aware of his prepossessions.

His chief weakness is esthetic. The studies of men of letters in these volumes are shrewd and revealing. His subjects are, for the first time, truly related to the web of circumstance, the complex of ideas from which they emerged. But it is with the important men who were not great writers that he is most successful—with Bryant, with Theodore Parker, with Simms, with Lowell, with Oliver Wendell Holmes. In Melville he is quite inadequate, because too much of Melville lies outside the chosen scene of conflict. His Emerson is admirable because Emerson is on every wave of his times; his Thoreau also in so far as Thoreau is a rebel; Poe he wisely leaves aside.

It is scarcely fair to criticize his book for its weakness in pure literary criticism, since literary criticism in its esthetic phase, is not his purpose, and may be well left to others who will build upon his new foundations. Yet the lack is indicative of a fault. Like Jefferson, who probably deserves Mr. Parrington's brevet of the greatest man in American history, though by no means all his praise, the author is neglectful of the laws of chance in an evolutionary system that may go backward as easily as forward. The hypothesis of a state where man is free to live at his best is an inspiring theme, and those who battle for it deserve to be called the sons of light. But the honest Federalists who believed in no such hope, and who put their faith in character and responsibility, would have been justified if French democracy had overturned the new Republic, and the pessimists who see in our present industrialization an approaching ruin of all that is fine in civilization, are not to be condemned if they believe that a pound of moral courage is worth more than a pound of democratic hope. There is more to be said for Edwards, for Hawthorne, for Godkin, for John Adams (though Parrington gives him nearly his due) than this book says. What one thinks of such men depends upon what one wants, and Mr. Parrington's wants are perhaps too hopeless of complete accomplishment to justify the tossing overboard of so much lofty skepticism, so much stern character, so much belief in the responsibility of the better brain for a future where better brains and finer living should be made possible just because these qualities once ranged good men against democracy. I accept his picture of the American struggle as just for the America that the clearest minds visualized, that Whitman believed in, that Emerson hoped for, but in the industrialized America of the future, even an Increase Mather, autocrat for a code, a Hamilton, who could turn petty economics into great ones, an Irving, poet of cultivated leisure, whom the author despises, might fight for the forces of light not darkness. The American story is not yet told, and all prophesy was not given to the priests of democracy.

It is impossible to review adequately two volumes so provocative, with such range of material, and so nice a workmanship, in brief space, the more so since temptation to set off upon speculations suggested by the text is almost irresistible. No higher

Main Currents in American Thought. The Colonial Mind; The Romantic Revolution in America. Vols. 1 and 2. By Vernon Louis Parrington. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1927. $4 a volume.

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praise than this, however, could be given to a book which deserves to be widely read, and must become standard in a field where controversy will always continue, but where facts, guidance, and reasoned judgment (no matter how partisan) have been conspicuously absent. It is this book, and not the inchoate and ill-proportioned "Cambridge History of American Literature," which should be the point of departure for every study in the developing American mind. Many readers will, literally, depart from its conclusions, but none will escape its influence.

Mr. Parrington is a professor in the University of Washington where the last wave of his democratic hope reached the Pacific, and perhaps this book could not have been written except in a West which still remembers, though it does not often practice, Jacksonian democracy. His heroes escape by good fortune the dogmatism of Yale or the selfishness of Harvard, his villains are warped by their New England education. It is cheering to one who believes in decentralization to see the sins of our fathers in culture returned upon their heads by a writer who in his intellectual history has at last escaped from New England into America. Nor has he left his skill, his scholarship, his culture behind.

Blackboard Versus Column

THE MYTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL. By CHARLES W. WOOD. New York: John Day. 1927. $2.50.

Reviewed by JOSEPH J. JASTROW

WHETHER this is a book of consequence or futility depends upon how seriously one takes it. It introduces a phrase that may achieve longevity if not immortality. For Mr. Wood academic knowledge is truth "of the blackboard,"—an idol of abstraction. To Mr. Wood, I, as one of the guild, have been living all my life not only *with* a blackboard—which is true—but *on* a blackboard, which invites Mark Twain's comment upon the premature report of his death: "Greatly exaggerated." For my profession concerns mental life as a vivid, crowded reality, even though some of the findings may be put on a blackboard. But in recognizing in studium his true rival, Mr. Wood's instinct is right. Mr. Wood is a journalist; and the account of his career is interesting alike for its early limitations and his assurance that his "fellowship on the Boston and Maine Railroad . . . in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen" taught him more of human nature than any academic Fellowship could have done; so be it.

Mr. Wood has emphatic opinions of his own upon highly vital topics that may possess more "locomotive" truth than is written or dreamt of in your blackboard philosophy. But as I hold that any academicism that is worth its salt must have a strong individualistic flavor, this does not worry me. I have a large sympathy, however tainted with the chalk of the blackboard, with his approach, which is that of an individualist despite the denial of his title. But the conclusion that studies are vanity because some are vainly pursued, and because to a certain mood academic thinking seems a procession of false leads, and comes to life only when vitalized by a generous baptism, even to total immersion, in the waters of reality, is, to adopt Mr. Wood's constant lapse into paradox, both true and false,—and to me by that token false. We agree that truth comes from life: and journalism reflects life, has indeed no other warrant. Yet Mr. Wood, by occupation a journalist, is a philosopher by inclination and intention. In a retort courteous I place him as an exemplar of columnar philosophy,—a brand telling and true enough for the purposes of the daily column, which gives the commuter a reflective "kick" on his way to the city, where it may serve to relieve the tedium of the market talk at lunch, but gives way to a different nugget on the way home. He has ably expanded a columnar philosophy to a volume scale. His challenge becomes a geometrical contest of the blackboard versus the column. With purely academic money, I am backing the blackboard.

His denial of the individual comes dangerously near to an academic distinction. The thesis is this: human relations are the authentic reality; they arise from the social activities of men; they are the issues of cumulative thought and practice, of generations of relationships,—these so completely determine what each one of us is and does, that any "individual" contribution to that total responsiveness which each calls his life is negligibly slight. To claim it as his own is the "myth." He is human only through this mighty cumulative stream of relations; without it he would be not a Crusoe—an obvious myth—but an anthropoid. The biological part of his conditioning—that which dominates in conditioning the life of a dog or an ape—recedes into insignificance in the perspective of behavior of a twentieth century specimen of American. Except as we stand on the achievements of a human past, our reach of true living would be a feeble grasp. In that sense the individual, if you like, is near to zero in the human equation, and becomes a myth insofar as a disregard of this cumulative collective conditioning through strata of socialized humanity may have brought us to think otherwise. The "John Smith" in the man of that name is a myth as much as the "John Doe" or "Richard Roe" that occupies a space that any other name may fill; he is at all events a speck. But if we accept for the day the thesis as interesting and worth while, we see no reason for not holding on to the accredited sense of individualism, which refers to the more or less distinctive and significant responsiveness so far as it is not wholly submerged in the conventional John-Smithiness of all of us. It is the part of "his" book that makes it reflect Mr. Wood's individualism, which remains vivid despite its official execution.

My point is that to say: "In order that there might be tooth-brushes man had to give up the whole principle of individualism," or "Funny thing, this human nature!" or that Mr. Rockefeller doesn't own his oil, or his money, has indeed to employ experts to spend it, while he can only be trusted to give away shiny dimes; that the steam-engine "knocked the whole family business into a cocked hat," or, to quote from the jacket: "America has moved out of the United States and into Oil and Steel and Electricity;" or, "In times of peace there must be all-around war. But in times of war, there must be complete harmony," and an endless series of similar contributions to columnar philosophy, doesn't get you anywhere; it may be provocative—the favorite word of blurbs—and it may be just provoking. And despite this disguise, one has the impression that Mr. Wood has something to say. This is confirmed by the seriousness of the topics that he discusses,—humanity and morality, love and labor, sex and family, politics and capitalism, crime and social service, war and peace, business and human organization, and by the fact that with all the modernism and radicalism of his approach and his stroke and his game, he finds in the life and sayings of Jesus the most constant guide to the truth as he sees it through a journalistic glass, not darkly but with electric brilliance. One may be excused from the task of setting into some orderly array this definitely engaging set of reflections and opinions on significant issues. If it were a lighter example of columnar philosophy, it might be dismissed altogether.

Perhaps I am taking it too seriously. But it offers occasion to speculate what may be the next stage in popularization after the best-sellership of the "Story of Philosophy," in comparison a drab and retrospective offering, if the scholar is to be replaced by the columnist in such serious issues. It may be that the scholar fails by not letting himself go, often perhaps having little go in him; or that the journalist fails by not holding himself in, often having little to hold. If a journalist believes that literature is journalism with a white collar on, or journalism literature in its shirt-sleeves, this conviction may have no more serious effect than to determine the handling of his "stories;" but it may determine the total range and thought of his contributions. But when the subject matter is science, the resulting perspective and its distortion cuts deeper than form, and may, if it gathers a clientèle, affect mental habits and philosophy more seriously. And in the end it gets nowhere. Somehow one misses the background. It is only when a master blackboardist, such as Bertrand Russell, approaches the same range of problems with the definite intention to bring to a public intelligibility the concentrated results of his reflections, that we seem to have meat enough to justify all the seasoning that he may choose to add. The columnar philosopher mistakes the seasoning for the sandwich and cultivates a false taste and an unhygienic diet. It would be interesting to see the main points of Mr. Wood's contentions translated from the column to the blackboard and find out how far they fuse with the discoveries of other radical-minded and discerning individualists, congenial to Mr. Wood's companionship.

Untermeyer's Parodies

COLLECTED PARODIES. By LOUIS UNTERMEYER. New York: Harcourt, Brace. 1926. $2.75.

Reviewed by LEE WILSON DODD

MR. UNTERMEYER is an accomplished poet, a masterly technician both in verse and prose, a man of wide reading, a sound critic, an admirable anthologist; and in addition to all these gifts he is amazingly clever, famous for his agile wit, his conversational sallies, and his incorrigible puns. It would seem, then, that nature has endowed him with every gift for the production of parody, that exquisite plaything of the sophisticated and critical mind. Yet his collected parodies are for one reader definitely disappointing. I say for one reader advisedly, because the art of parody deals with such delicate imponderables of the mind that it defies analysis. A supremely good parody rings the bell, that is about all one may venture to say about it. But does it ring the bell for all who are in any sense qualified to read it? Probably not. The poetry of Yeats, for example, may weave for you as inescapable a spell as for me, yet we may bring to the reading of Yeats subtle but enormous differences in feeling and apprehension—and, if so, what might strike me as a diabolically right parody of Yeats might very well seem to you narrowly but fatally to have missed its mark. I confess, with reluctance, that over and over again Mr. Untermeyer seems to me to have missed his mark. When I read his facile and expert parodies I am always expecting the bell to ring, but too often it does not do so. It could not surprise me to learn, however, that for many another reader it rings again and again.

It is true, of course, that no parodist, however gifted, is uniformly successful. As a parodist of prose Max Beerbohm is often—to my ear, at least—uncannily perfect; yet his "Christmas Garland" begins with a parody of Henry James which, though it catches the superficial manner, utterly misses the peculiar rhythm, the accent, of that tortuous but always beautifully cadenced prose. These may well seem esoteric considerations; but I believe they make all the difference in parody. You cannot, as a parodist, ring the bell for a given author unless you can reproduce the subtle, entirely personal rhythm of his words. It is just these rhythmical subtleties of style that are the signature of the man. Thus, Yeats could by no possibility have written the following two lines from Mr. Untermeyer's parody of his verse:

> Down by the dashing waters the three wise men did go,
> And there they cut a hazel wand and laid it in the snow.

There is nothing of Yeats there but the hazel wand—a rather small proportion, and that perhaps too obvious. Nor, though the first line was written by Coleridge, could Coleridge have written:

> Alone, alone, all, all alone,
> In lonely lands though he may be. . . .

not because the second line does not harmonize with the first, but because—oh well, because I feel it in my bones that he could not! There is no proving these crepuscular matters. It is simply an assertion I am making because I believe it to be true.

In short, criticism of parody in verse so technically brilliant as Mr. Untermeyer's carries one into transcendental realms of discrimination, becomes entirely subjective—and therefore, doubtless, completely absurd. It is perhaps fairer to close by admitting that I can think of no second American poet who has parodied certain of his contemporaries one-half so well.

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Trader Horn of Africa

TRADER HORN: Being the Life and Work of Alfred Aloysius Horn, an "Old Visitor." Taken down and edited by ETHELREDA LEWIS. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1927. $4.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

THERE are two romances here. One is the romance of the African wilderness more than half a century ago—when Livingstone's fame was new, before Stanley was heard of, when Du Chaillu's books were read with incredulity, and while Africa was still a half-fabulous continent of darkness, slavery, cannibal tribes, fevers, and monstrous beasts. This element is a story of incessant adventure, with some touches that might be Rider Haggard's. The other romance is of the discovery, in the year 1925 or 1926, under the mask of a shabby doss-house peddler in Johannesburg, of a gentleman-adventurer, a man of the Trelawney type, a fighter and discoverer fallen upon evil days; the rescue of this grizzled pioneer, his conversion into a historian of his own exploits, and his gradual emergence as an amazing story-teller, philosopher, and *savant*. He is a character who might have stepped from Hakluyt, or Prescott's chronicle of the conquistadores, yet with something Dickensian about him too; he gradually looms up, this man in the habiliments of a "Joburg" beggar, as one of the pathfinders of Africa.

* * *

The unusual charm of the book lies in the adroit interweaving of these two elements of romance. We see the two themes, one of incident, one of character, unfold side by side. The more exciting is the penetration of Africa by young Alfred Aloysius Horn, the milk of his English grammar-school still on his lips; his initiation into the mysteries of ivory-trading, gorilla-hunting, cannibal rites, tribal wars, voodoism, and the ways of elephants and pigmies. The more deeply interesting is the portrait of A. A. Horn as an old man, an individual of astonishing saltiness. Illiterate. Proud of his adventures. Proud of his smattering of French, of his ability to paint in oils. Deferential. Yet contemptuous of the lesser breeds like the Portuguese and French. Full of stray memories from all stages of his career—the time he saw Cecil Rhodes dead drunk from too much prickly pear brandy, for example. Full of his own theories about prehistoric Africa, the Malays vs. King Solomon, literature, education, and empire-building. Full of sage bits of philosophy: "Aye, if we'd think of Death as the hand of Nature it'd be no worse than lying down to sleep in a cornfield. It's when the parsons trick out a natural process with all sorts of common regalia like Heaven and Hell that it becomes something to fear."

* * *

What made it possible for the book to have this double charm was the tact and wisdom of Mrs. Lewis, the South African novelist who has acted as editor. The "old struggler" Horn, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, came to her door to sell a wire gridiron which he had twisted. Something in his undaunted, much-buffeted look caught her eye; once she got him to talk, the Elizabethan sting of his speech caught her imagination. It took effort to lay bare the lode of gold. Hardships, the dust of the years, the weakness of old age, had almost deprived him of his memories of youth, battle, and exploitation in the Africa of 1870 to 1880. But by persistent questioning from Mrs. Lewis, by adroit prompting through old-time dishes, old-time names, old-time press clippings, she helped him dredge up the past from the deeps of his consciousness. Week by week, laboring by his candle in his doss-house bed (one shilling a night and neighbors in all stages of drunkenness and rowdiness) old Horn got his chapters down upon paper. The spelling is uncertain, the dates are unreliable, now and then even the elementary facts seem a bit wobbly; but the main structure is admirable. It is one side of Africa of the seventies and eighties—the trader's side—as it has probably never been presented before.

But if Mrs. Lewis was tactful enough to let Horn write his own story, she was also wise enough to perceive that he talked better than he wrote. So when he came weekly to leave his chapter for the book ("It'll be a ponderous work—it sure will. But it's weaving out very nicely. Aye.") she let him talk over his memories as he liked to talk. She has set down these priceless conversations, an intimate revelation of the character of the simple, earthy, noble old patriarch, as a postscript to each chapter. They vitalize the book. They throw searchlights back through the stilted, misspelt, yet sincere passages which have come from his pen. They are rough like the man; but they enable us to see and hear him better than we see and hear and feel Africa.

Horn must have been eighteen when he reached the West Coast from Liverpool, and set about learning the ivory and rubber trade both as a clerk and as a ranger along the Kamerun and Congo-land rivers. It was a rough world for a lad to be thrown upon. He tells us something of the sickness of the heart he felt when he first saw an African tribesman toss his wornout, ailing mother—as was the custom—into a river full of crocodiles. "Best not to throw too high a light on some of my experiences on the Coast. It never does to give good folk a shock. Aye. Talk of dreadful scenes!" His white associates included pirates, slavetraders, and slave-drivers. His black acquaintances thought nothing of crucifying an enemy head downward. Even the missionaries, to Horn's mind, were none too scrupulous. "Why, Livingstone killed more men than ever I did, with all me rubber and ivories." Horn had a tender heart, as he shows in a passage upon his early hunting experiences:

> I stayed two days at Eliwa Mpoloor, and went gorilla hunting on the second day. I managed to shoot one large female, one out of three we met in a grove. The animal was sitting peacefully playing with something near her close to an old tree stump. She was only 250 yards off when I fired she fell forward dead the bullet had gone through her head from temple to temple. On approaching we found a young baby gorilla which had gone to her breast immediately she fell. I felt great sorrow at this sight and made a resolution I would never shoot another of these animals with their babies, it looked too much like murder.

* * *

Of many of the Africans, Horn thought highly—of none more highly than the cannibals, to one tribe of whom he became blood-brother. "Cannibals? The most moral race on earth. The women chaste and the men faithful. I've lived amongst them like a brother, a young lad clean and safe." He learned to esteem highly the medical art practised by the natives. Some small red berries cured him of West Coast fever forever. Bark emulsions and the white of wool crickets, stuffed into a wound, cured his thumb when it was half torn off by the explosion of a gun. He saw the native medicine-men extract worms fro mthe eyeball by a little sharp bamboo needle. As for their physical feats, a description which he gives of a muscle dance by a bushman would indicate that it was marvelous.

> Then the breasts, first right then left, began to pop in and out, the stomach began to keep time after this the mussels of the arm, then the left eye right eye, then left toe right toe, all keeping time with the music seemingly without an effort, then the right eye then the left eye. We all cheered.

It is a book too crowded to be summarized in any detail. Horn, it is plain, was an untrained and unscientific observer, and we sometimes distrust his impressions. It is also evident that the lapse of time has interfered with his accuracy. Yet the book is so consistently vivid and interesting that we feel glad to strain a point and take almost everything on faith. The native method of impounding and trapping elephants to be killed for ivory; the habits of the gorilla; a fight between dogs and a leopard; a duel between bull elephants; the mad appetite of inland natives for salt; copper manufacture in the jungle; the scenery of the Ogowe and other rivers; tribal initiations; the impostures of witch doctors, and how one unwittingly signed his own death sentence—this is the kind of material which fills the pages. It is all rough hewn, thrown together, higgledy-piggledy, related with much repetition and in commonplace language. Yet the book has constant atmosphere, and its very roughness gives the desired effect. Take Horn's little note on the crocodile, inserted just after his account of how he stabbed a native enemy to death in a river:

> Aye, I swam under him, and tapped his claret enough to fetch a whole bevy of crocs for a meal. A crocodile won't eat unless he smells blood. He always needs some appetiser before he'll trouble to eat. But a croc's a thorough pig when he gets you. The smell of blood goes to his head, as they say. He gets a good grip through nature having provided that two of his teeth grow upward through his nose. He's fanciful too about his food. Never cares for it too fresh. His cave entrance is always a bit below the water level, but having dived in he then climbs up to dry ground above the water level. He leaves his meat until the processes of nature invite him to eat. A proper pig. And never stops growing, the natives say. Aye. Olive green in hunting time. Yellow when the fish are breeding.

The one portion of the book which smacks not of nature and fact but of invention is the section which deals with Nina, a white woman of great beauty, a goddess in Isorga, an English girl captured by the natives and brought up in sacred seclusion. Horn boasts that he rescued her from the temple, at the risk of his life; and that he also stole from the temple a wondrous great ruby, which he later sold for an enormous sum to Tiffany's. The white goddess, the huge ruby, and the mad flight from the temple and down the river to safety may have a certain substructure of act. But some of the embroideries, as has been said, seem to smack of Rider Haggard's fictions. Perhaps Horn confused his memories with various romances which he had read in the far distant past.

But when all deductions and subtractions have been made, the book remains of truly remarkable interest, color, and value. As John Galsworthy says in his introduction, much of it is "gorgeous" and "full of sheer stingo." It is infused with the poetry of wonder. Yet greater than the book, it is clear, is the strange old man who, bent, pipe in mouth, ruminating wisely as he peddled tinware from door to door in South African streets, paused on the brink of the grave to write it. He is fit to stand as a type of the adventurer and pioneer; for the true pioneer is just this combination of artist and philosopher, doer and man of action.

The Literary Pot

WILD GOSLINGS. By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT. New York: George H. Doran. 1927. $2.50.

By DAVID MCCORD,

Author of "Oddly Enough"

WHEN a writer cements in a book what he once poured, liquidly, into a column, he braves a danger. In England he would be an essayist; in America, by the nice adjustment of literary standards, he becomes one. The unfortunate quirk of this prevalent judgment is that, while the first half of it remains largely true, the second rarely follows. We measure our essayists by the volume; in England they do it by the essay. The Englishman, we discover, is an essayist because he is invariably somewhere in the secure and leisurely track of Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey, or Stevenson. He is a Machen, a Lynd, a Priestley, or an Alpha of the Plow. If he is very light he is some latter-day Jerome. Yet in either extreme one spies in him at once the quiet craftsman writing, it appears, out of the love of his profession and with a will and purpose that are no one's if not his own. Scratch him, and you will find a certain British distinction to his style; a work unhurried and tranquil. The English columnist, moreover, is producing in spite of his editor and not because of him. The dangerous fevers of the streets wrack him not at all. In the *Guardian*, the *Post*, or the *Saturday Review* he runs forever a normal pulse. A rustic Ryecroft, either he has never heard the terrible "Copy" bawled loudly in his ears or else, with exquisite indifference and command, he has nerved himself against the sound of it.

The American columnist (I do not refer to a column conductor) is rarely any of these things. He writes generally because of his editor and in the fearful temper of the day. He is an arch slave to production. He composes on the typewriter, with the pica stick importunately at his elbow. Far from owning the quiet mind, he is regularly dragooned into refurbishing if not the day's story at least some angular aspect of it. He can be vastly occupied with the thunder of a morning. It is even conceivable that he is happy in the reverberation and echo of which he is so much a part. How is it, then, that he shall produce enduring literature? *Why should he?* After all, the American columnist has set himself in a niche no more secure than the leaves of the calendar which he turns. When he prints in a book the siftings of one year or three it is an outrage to cry that he is not in the company of his English brothers. The book will not alter his paragraphs. Judge him after his own intent.

Mr. Benét, in the puddle of "Wild Goslings," has escaped from and succumbed to all the frailties of his art. His sketches are uneven. They bear the mark of the haste in which they were committed. His style is ruffled and as full of pin-feathers as the birds themselves. These are not necessarily grave faults. They are not in themselves destructive of

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the personality that created them. They might condemn a collection of essays, but Mr. Benét is here eloquently *not* an essayist. And if we stretch him, after our fashion, across the fearful chasm of his 350 new pages, we shall certainly do him an injustice. He should be taken gosling by gosling; of which, at the outset, any one is as viable as another.

Mr. Benét, that is, as a columnist does not integrate well. The merit of his book is the preservation in readable form of some very excellent sketches (many of which have appeared in these columns) distinct from some very poor ones; and the large evidence of a sensitive, poetic mind trafficking with the ingredients of the literary pot. Phrases and expressions of reliable charm are common to almost every page. There is a great deal of humor: "The background of 'Onions,' by Lucilla Perthops, is a regular rash of asterisks." Mr. Benét in prose, as indisputably in verse, has the capacity of saying the usual thing in an unusual way. This he does with unbolstered simplicity. Having said it, he can also slip with equal ease into a colorless detritus of slang and careless phrasing, of needless quotation marks and weak unsubtleties. These constant declines, even in an otherwise well-ordered sketch, cloud the receipts of a very amazing imagination. I like to think that in poetry, where he exhibits a searching and competent craftsmanship, Mr. Benét realizes a hundred times what he does once in this kind of prose. I like him well in "Five Years of It," in "The Romance of Words," in the revivals of "Our Shameless Past," and other chapters, as I dislike him in the artificial mood of "Just Cats." Perhaps the word I have been searching for is entertaining. If your mind pivots easily from bathroom reciters and paper faces to indigestion and city mythology, you will find it is, much of it, exactly that. If not, "stripped of adventitious wrappages," you will journey, I fear, through no more than a casual, amalgamated chaos.

Odds and Ends

CHAINS: LESSER NOVELS AND STORIES. By THEODORE DREISER. New York: Boni & Liveright. 1927. $2.50.

Reviewed by GORHAM B. MUNSON

UNLIKE "An American Tragedy," "Chains" will not add to Mr. Dreiser's reputation. It is a collection of odds and ends of short stories and novelettes, the quality of which is distinctly below Mr. Dreiser's best as seen in "Sister Carrie," "The Titan," "Twelve Men," "Free and Other Stories," not to mention "An American Tragedy" once more.

The familiar *motifs* recur in "Chains." In "Convention" passion violates sociological teaching and conventionality twists the wayward husband into obedience again. In "Sanctuary" the glamour and luxury of life attracts a simple and ignorant girl, moth-like, to beat her illicit way toward the gay lights, and she gets burned in consequence, a dénoûement that some take to be tragic and others, recalling Plato on tragedy, prefer to name pathetic. In the title story, "Chains," it is the old theme of marital disharmony as it is in "Fulfilment," and so throughout the book—seamy picture after seamy picture rises to confute the "moralists" whose views Mr. Dreiser finds so incomplete and unfaithful to actuality. "The inevitabilities of our fate are: love and hope, fear and death, interwoven with our lacks, inhibitions, jealousies, and greeds," says the Foreword.

The writing is as wasteful and cumbersome as ever, though it is not often pointed out that in the first place Mr. Dreiser writes a banal sentence as though *he* had discovered it and, secondly, that he generally escapes utter deadness of diction by using here and there a word or phrase that is so precise or forceful or weighty that the entire passage is barely lifted by its energy. Paradoxically, it is the defects of his prose that give it what positive character it has, for these defects stem from his own habits of experience—which is perhaps why he has been deaf to all exhortations to improve his style.

Two things are curious about this book. One is Mr. Dreiser's very simplified adaptation of certain advanced technics of the day. There is in the title story the chain of Garrison's emotional associations with his wife and his reflections on them during the course of a railroad journey home. These associations give us the story of his previous married life. But interspersed and set in italics are the comments Garrison's mind makes on the passengers, progress, and incidents of the trip, and these form a narrative of the present which runs parallel to the past. Both narratives coalesce when he reaches the house and finds his wife absent. The other curious element is Mr. Dreiser's excursion into Oriental tale-telling on two occasions and the strange fact that he writes more correctly in these than is usual in his wrestling with syntax and rhythm and exactitude.

One of the best stories is "St. Columba and the River." We read Dreiser—many of us at any rate—because he has a tenacious memory for the dramatic and fascinating schemes of American life (*e. g.*, political and financial schemes) and the working out of these, no matter how crudely written, carries us to the conclusion. In "St. Columba and the River" the real drama is supplied by the progress of the engineering scheme to tunnel beneath the North River. The workman, McGlathery, and the heavy fun Mr. Dreiser pokes at his religious superstitions, are incidental to our main interest.

Under the Magnifying Glass

PEOPLE ROUND THE CORNER. By THYRA SAMTER WINSLOW. New York: Alfred A. KNOPF. 1927. $2.50.

Reviewed by AMABEL WILLIAMS-ELLIS

IF the "People Round the Corner" are really as she says, it is imperative that Mrs. Winslow should at once move house. For she is an able writer and observer, and she knows how to put a large middle section of the social ladder under her magnifying glass. Just as a schoolman in the middle age could tell you how many angels could dance on the point of a needle, so Mrs. Winslow can analyze the infinitesimal grades that distinguish the social sets in her small towns. She knows their clothes, and what they smoke, and what each one drives. There is no style of interior furnishing from the broken rockers and red plush of the social outcast, to the pink lamp shades and white tiled bathrooms of the entirely correct, that Mrs. Winslow cannot set before us. She makes us see each little group of people in its social implications and in its contrast to the groups immediately above and below. Her people stand before us anatomized as far as their outsides are concerned, oppressors and oppressees, mean, petty, and rapacious.

Only in three out of this whole collection of short stories are we allowed to enjoy ourselves or to sympathize for a moment with any of the characters. We thoroughly approve the murder in one story, we are allowed to feel distinct sympathy with one downtrodden and defenseless old lady, and with a down at heel actress in a third. For the rest, starvation diet, and solitary confinement are our portion. The milk of human kindness is withheld, we see not a single friendly inhabitant. Now nobody is going to deny the value of satire either as art or as a form of social service, nor are we going to minimize the horror of fiction that has "gone sweet." But when Mrs. Winslow reads the work of the best satiric writers ancient and modern, say Swift, Gibbon, Nietzsche, Synge, Sinclair Lewis, and Aldous Huxley, she will find a note that she has missed in her book. These writers take the skin off their victims because all the while they have a vision of something better and more beautiful than the victim might have been or done, and they take it out of him for missing his chance and not being or doing it. They hold their characters up by the scruffs of their shameful necks, just as Mrs. Winslow does. But for one very definite reason the gesture is different.

Swift hated Mankind but he loved Tom, Dick, and Harry. Gibbon hated Emperors and most Bishops because they were not worthy of the august drama in which he saw them as moving. Nietzsche, the most plain speaking of all, despised everyone in turn and yet so loved the world that he called upon these despicable ones to perform the evolutionary miracle of creating the superman. But why multiply instances? Babbitt's snobbishness and dishonesty are hateful because they press upon and distort the gentle, charming, vulnerable man within the realtor.

But Mrs. Winslow does not make clear her reasons why she feels that her soda fountain clerks, stenographers, housewives, and drummers are so blasphemously unpleasant. And now and then we are left (quite unfairly, no doubt) with the feeling that it is because they dress badly or don't know which fork to use, or have never heard of Ming porcelain. She has not, in fact, shown us why they were despicable or what was the beauty or the adventure or the learning which they neglected to their undoing. After all, if there had not been a slice of sky and the distant prospect of the Delectable Mountains for him to look at, the Man with the Muck Rake would not have been so very much to blame. She obviously has the ability to write well. Perhaps next time she will turn her powers of analysis on the queer loves and idealism of this odd race.

The Cauldron of Perception

TO THE LIGHTHOUSE. By VIRGINIA WOOLF. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1927. $2.50.

Reviewed by ZONA GALE

IF Virginia Woolf has not made a contribution to the novel of the future, it will be because the future shall arrive at the same essence-of-novel by another method. "Some notion was in both of them," she says, "about the ineffectiveness of action, the supremacy of thought." It is at this notion that she has arrived, and it lies implicit in her novels, and never more surely so than in "To the Lighthouse." Through three hundred pages there streams the current of the thought, directed, subconscious, accidental, tremendous, of a half dozen quite average human beings. All that actually "happens"—namely, the death of the central character and of two of her children—goes into parentheses of from two to four lines. The onsweeping stream of the book has to do with these average living ones, looking out from an interior unknown to them onto exteriors equally unknown, all of these being cauldrons of perception, memory, and associative awareness. And not in event, she seems to say, but in this thunderous drama lies life, the life of life, the essence of fiction, the stuff of a novel.

This is far more than the "stream of consciousness." In the one book of Dorothy Richardson's which I have read, "Pointed Roofs," Miss Sinclair in her introduction, defines this novel as one consisting of that which Miriam sees and feels, uttered precisely as she sees and feels it, and as consisting of no more. There the stream is swift, flat, defined, self-evidential.

Mrs. Woolf carries all this into another domain, a domain not of impression but of a deeper perception, of actual spiritual contact with personality, relationship, speculation, and irrelevance. Her art consists in thus touching toward trail, peak, ray, and every such release the reader is challenged to follow. Following, he finds his own in personality, relationship, speculation, irrelevance—or he does not find these. Either he too creates as he reads, or he does not create.

* * *

Thus for fiction Mrs. Woolf is doing what Stravinsky does for the orchestral. Both are *shifting the area of participation.*

For me the charm of "To the Lighthouse" is beyond all words, but one ought to be careful to whom one says this. Not to one who would stare if you mentioned that the book begins in the afternoon with a projected trip to the lighthouse, and that nearly two hundred pages later falls twilight of the same day, with the trip abandoned; and that more than a hundred pages—and ten years—later, the book ends just as the lighthouse island is reached. But to mention this outline is beside the point, is irrelevant to the book, is treacherous, is, in fine, a comment in a dimension other than the book's dimension, since in the rushing consciousness of those few people summering in the Hebrides there have taken place innumerable excursions through all the apparently static, which is found to be beating and pulsating with life. For inaction Mrs. Woolf has found that which science has discovered for the inorganic—that there is no such thing.

One can quote from the book for the pleasure of the ordinarily dimensioned but, like wild flowers brought into the house, these are then unintegrated and reveal nothing of the meadow dimension.

> . . . that community of feeling with other people which emotion gives, as if the walls of partition had become so thin that practically (the feeling was one of relief and happiness) it was all one stream, and chairs, tables, maps were hers, were theirs, it did not matter whose, and Paul and Minta would carry on when she was dead.
>
> Besides she knew, directly she came into the room, that the miracle had happened: she wore her golden haze. Sometimes she had it, sometimes not. She never knew why it came or why it went, or if she had it. . . . Yes, tonight she had it tremendously: she knew that by the way Mr.

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Ramsay told her not to be a fool. She sat beside him, smiling.

Sitting opposite him, could she not see as in an X-ray photograph, the ribs and thigh bones of the young man's desires to impress himself, lying dark in the mist of his flesh—that thin mist which convention had laid over his burning desire to break into the conversation?

Phrases came. Visions came. Beautiful pictures. Beautiful phrases. But what she wished to get hold of was that very jar on the nerves, the thing itself before it has been made anything. Get that and start afresh; get that and start afresh; she said desperately, pitching herself firmly again before her easel.

No quotation avails. The distinction lies here: A spoonful of brine gives the flavor of the barrel, but, a spoonful of the sea at sunset, what of that?

The method now is of sufficient importance to enspell one for the space of a volume. Can such a method be integrated, permitting both action and "inaction" to take their places in a novel, as in life—events too being played upon by pulsation as, in this book, Mrs. Woolf plays upon that which we have been accustomed to call monotony? Why not? For this method, like the methods of all literature, is a quest. Meanwhile "To the Lighthouse" moves toward the core of life in letters.

Out of Carolina

CONGAREE SKETCHES. By E. C. L. Adams. Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press. 1927. $2.

THESE sketches stand in direct line of the tales that made Joel Chandler Harris famous and like them should find readers not only among students of folklore but also among that part of the public, young and old, which rejoices in the fertility and ingenuity of the untutored negro mind. They are exceedingly brief narratives, some of them mere snippets of dialogue, others stories of hardly more than two or three pages in length, and still others metrical versions of darkey legend and saying—all of them, howsoever slight, revelatory of the negro mind, and all of them delightful in their unsophistication.

Here again, as in the Uncle Remus tales, is observable that commingling of humor, wistfulness, and poetry that in the speech of even the least educated negro reflects the imaginative instinct of the race. Mr. Adams has deftly introduced his volume with a page of description that places his Congaree negroes against the background of Carolina swamp, and that at the same time conveys the picturesque quality of their thought.

I been down to de Congaree in de big swamps (says one of his darkeys) where de trees is tall an' de moss long an' gray, where de Bullace grow, an' where I hear de tune of de bird in de mornin'; down wey de wild turkey gobbles, way down on de Congaree; wey God's mornin' leads to de devil's night; down on de river, where night makes her sign, where owls on a dead limb talks of de dead, talks wid de dead and laughs like de dead, way down in de big swamps of de Congaree; down where de blunt-tailed moccasin crawls in de grass, where de air is stink wid de smell; where de water is green, where de worms is spewed out of de groun', where de groun' is mud, where de trees sweat like a man; down in de home of de varmint an' bugs, down in de slick yallow mud, de black mud an' de brown, way down in de big swamps of de Congaree; down in de land of pizen, where de yellow-fly sting, in de home of de fever an' wey death is de king. Dat wey I been, down in de big swamps. Down in de land of mosquito, way down in de big swamps, down on de Congaree.

That same poetic fancy that distils the very lushness and dankness of the swamp in this passage is infused through all the tales of the Congaree negro, whether they are of darkeys in association with their fellows or at their adventures with the angels. Both as folklore and story these sketches which Mr. Adams has collected and put into form are well worth the reading. They are prefaced by a heartening introduction by Paul Green.

The Macmillan Company offer a prize of $100 to the librarian suggesting the best title for a group of books which it has in prospect. The nucleus of the new library is to be the series projected by the Workers' Education Bureau, under the title, "The Workers' Bookshelf," of which the Macmillan Company are now to become the publishers. The series is to be edited by a distinguished board headed by Dr. Charles A. Beard. It is to include short volumes representative of the important aspects of American culture, including economics, politics, natural science, law, and much else.

The Bowling Green

The Folder

SPEAKING of possible inscriptions for the monument on the Long Island flying field where transatlantic flyers take off, how about this from *Rasselas*—

Remarked many ingenious contrivances to facilitate motion, and unite levity with strength.

"To unite levity with strength"—surely not a bad motto for the conduct of life in general.

* * *

Mr. Morgan Barnes, of Ojai, California, gets the prize for translation into Latin of Captain David Bone's Virgilian halloo (See Bowling Green of May 21). Mr. Barnes piles Pelion on Ossa as follows:—

CARMEN OSSEUM

(*From the English of Captain David W. Bone*)

Quare, Christophore, comes mihi magnos Atlantici fluctus Aquilone Africoque terga manis monstrorum volventia e profundis excitantibus non es permensus? Eheu quid memorabile non vidi ex tempore quo, tempestati irridens, Columnas superavi Herculaneas et, oris Africae barbarorum aridae nutricis post tergum relictis, litore quo olim fuit Carthago navem statui!

Ad portum Phalericum inde delatus in patriam Atheniensium celeriter vehiculo comparato ad castae Minervae templum fulgente sub luna luceque stellarum candentium sum vectus.

Amoenum oculisque gratum erat Byzantium quamquam ventis inhorrescebat Bosporus et procella nigrans nive commixta saevibat quae modo Hyadum lacrimantium stridens nos intrantes perterrebat.

Nam ea in urbe valde delectabant puellae tenerae tonsis capillis quae tenuiter vestitae miris in modis saltabant ad lyram agrestem et nobiscum ingenue versabantur. Praeterea poculis Cypri vinetis Aegaeis paullulum morati gavisi sumus.

Auspiciis prosperis Phoeboque orto Punicam oram legimus. Radiis Aurorae lucebant Tyrus et Sidon et Carmeli juga florea cum ventis secundis qui nos Pelusium ferrent vela dedimus.

Summo ex mari clarus surgebat Pharos et nobis in portum Alexandrinum cursum monstrabat. Simul ac ortus est Titan ancoram de puppi dejecimus loco quo olim regebant orientali luxu Antonius et Cleopatra. Omnibus ex partibus visendi salutandi studio barbari Graeci Nubii decurrebant.

Ornamenta Persica stragulaque fabulosa e Cathaia nobis insolitam inter musicam offerebantur. Calor ossa reliquit, mi Christophore, cum mihi subiit recordatio te heu longe abesse nec una saltaturum. Illis enim in locis colitur studiose Baal a plebe sordida vulgo Jazz nominatus quem deum precibus pie invocant puellae.

Nunc vero O Christophore desiderium tui me omnem habet. Dies et alter praeterlabitur, per tremulum aequor navi currimus, lenibus vela implentibus Zephyris, dum delphini lascivi Veneris deliciae spuma ludunt mareque coruscans turbant.

Veniet tamen dies cum tecum fuero Atlanticum diris Idibus non jam vexantibus, cum serta nectemus Caecubumque ad solennia reservatum cum pueri formosi profundent.

MORGAN BARNES.

* * *

A Harvard instructor sends us the following congenial inquiry. If any clients care to offer suggestions we will gladly forward them.

Some years ago when you were conducting the "Bowling Green" on the old *Evening Post*, you were good enough to notice some contributions of mine on John Donne (during his all too short burst of popularity) and other subjects. At that time you dubbed me "a friendly merchant of Water Street"; since then I have gone back to Harvard as a tutor in History and Literature.

Each summer we assign to students concentrating in this field a certain amount of reading, either fiction, history and biography of the Strachey type, or verse. It is quite useless to assign heavy reading such as Stubbs's "Constitutional Government of England" as it just doesn't get done. On the other hand, if we select easily readable books, we have found that students get interested and will do a surprising amount of reading.

To a Junior, naturally, one can assign more advanced books for this summer reading than to a Freshman. In the Middle Ages I have been starting the men off with things like John Addington Symonds's "Wine, Women and Song," Conan Doyle's "White Company," some of Scott's novels (which I don't like), Kingsley's "Hereward the Wake," Hardy's "Passe Rose," and others of that sort; in the Renaissance, the "Decameron," Marguerite of Navarre's "Heptameron," the Memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini, François Villon, etc.

And then, just because I think they are grand books, though quite outside the fields I tutor in, such titles as Hardy's "Jude the Obscure," Butler's "Way of All Flesh," Anatole France's "Penguin Island," and so forth.

The reason I am writing you, is to ask for suggestions; my only excuse for so doing is that I think the work we are doing is worth while and may appeal to you. I know you will recommend the "Leviathan"; but only an exceptional boy will read that during the dog days. If you have any favorites in lighter vein, preferably books illustrative of the life and manners of some period, I should be deeply grateful for a list.

E. W. P.

For my own part, I have grown more cautious about making suggestions. I should hardly dare propose *Leviathan* to a Harvard boy, he'd only think I was urging a trip abroad. It would be fun to suggest Sir Thomas Browne, or Thomas Fuller, or Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, if there were any real chance of their getting read. (Though I know a college girl in Brooklyn whose two special hobbies are Thomas Fuller and French slang. But then she is as unusual as the delightful Elizabeth Danvers, of whom Aubrey says, "She had prodigious parts for a woman. I have heard my father's mother say that she had Chaucer at her fingers' ends. Knew how to manage her estate as well as any man; understood jewells as well as any jeweller. Very beautifull, but only short-sighted. She maryed Sir Edmund Carey, but kept him to hard meate." I have often wanted to hear Sir Edmund's side of the story.)

The books that come into my mind have nothing to do with the Middle Ages. O. Henry, in young summers on a ranch in Texas, got his best fun out of Webster's Unabridged. I get very weary, by the way, of hearing that O. Henry "corrupted" or "debauched" the American short story. The deuce: just because his imitators could echo only the flash, the trickery, is that O. Henry's fault? In their hands the thing became a strumpet.

Perhaps the best thing an instructor could do would be to put in the student's hands a list of the titles in the World's Classics Series, or the Everyman Library, and duly swear him to read any ten ad lib. Almost all are Consommations du Premier Choix. (This is the time of year when small erring tags of French come to mind.) Surely the summer vacation would be a grand chance to loiter about in the pages of Boswell, or Pepys' Diary. This being the summer of William Blake's centennial, I have a hope that a few will trouble themselves with his own special brand of fright. If our Young Harvard is of a scientific or calculating turn, what could give him more excellent rationality than Leck's *Wrinkles in Practical Navigation* or W. W. R. Ball's *Mathematical Recreations and Problems*—a book that makes all the Ask Me Anothers and Guggenheims seem mere kindergarten palaver. Summer is the time to die with Ivan Ilyitch and be born again with Moby Dick. To be educated with Henry Adams and eat grass with Walt Whitman.

* * *

Apropos erring tags of French, a little book that would make ideal steamer reading for anyone going across, anyone really interested in lingo, is *A Glossary of French Slang*, by Olivier Leroy and published by the World Book Company, of Yonkers, N. Y. This is not one of those detestable little manuals of tourist gabble but a gorgeous compendium of Gallic vulgate, edited by a French professor. You mustn't mind a certain number of rather strenuously candid metaphors, and you'll be wary, I hope, how you use some of them. If you can translate, right off the bat, such argot as il a l'oeil americain, ella une araignee dans le plafond, il y a du monde au balcon, j'ai le bec sale, on lui a monte le bobechon, un verre de chien, etre a la comedie, pas de cresson sur la fontaine, faire monter a l'echelle, mettre du beurre dans les epinards, ta gueule, bebe! then you don't need this little book. I only wish I myself had known of it before. If and when I next get to France I shall have vast hilarity in trying out some of its brisk neologies. That fellow at the cafe-bar on the Boule Miche, I can just see him grin.

* * *

Gissing Pond, out in the green Salamis Estates, is no more. Some lusty men appeared one day, dug trenches, and drained it. Now it is only a mud-hole, and evidently some building operation is toward. The high-minded H. H. remarks that whatever house is built on that site will hear the ghost-voices of April evenings that first lured Mr. Gissing on his quest.

I had always dreamed that somehow that particular corner of woodland might remain in fief to solitude. I had even vaguely schemed, somehow or other, getting it made into a permanent boudoir for frogs, a little sort of Endymion alcove of the world such as will be needed when New York spreads herself over the whole western end of Long Island. Gissing Park, I imagined it! I hope it will teach me a lesson, that a dream is ineffective unless backed by a title-deed.

But indeed I shall be surprised if whoever lives there does not sometimes hear, in the anxious dusks of spring, the barking of a mongrel phantom.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

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Books of Special Interest

Character Sketches

BYZANTINE PORTRAITS. By CHARLES DIEHL. Translated by HAROLD BELL. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1927.

Reviewed by CONRAD CHAPMAN

THIS is the second book by Professor Diehl to appear in English here within the last twelve months. The translator has left nothing to be desired in the way of a smooth, idiomatic rendering of a French book whose chief claim is its style; and for those who do not read French with ease, he has rendered a further service. Except for forgotten passages in Gibbon and Finlay and for a few chapters in Bury's "Later Roman Empire," none of the material here presented has been published before in English.

Diehl's book consists of nine biographical sketches, of which seven are of Empresses and two of Emperors; to these are added four supplementary chapters. Except for Endocia, wife of Theodosius, in the fifth, and for Theodora, wife of Justinian, in the sixth century, the personages chosen lived between 750 and 1100 A. D. The object of the author is to show that even in that age and place woman played the more important rôle. He has therefore picked the seven Empresses for their superiority and the two Emperors for their foolish or base character. With great refinement of detail and no small literary skill, he proceeds to develop this *cherchez-la-femme* theory of history, so dear to the French.

As we should expect, these famous ladies are painted in all the attributes associated with their romantic lives and the pomp and intrigue of the Byzantine Court. They are good-looking, of course. Endocia is described as "very beautiful, being rather tall, with a wonderful figure, and curly blond hair that framed her features in a golden aureole and enhanced the brilliancy of her fair complexion. Her lovely eyes were intelligent and full of life, and she kept them modestly lowered. She had a pure Greek nose, and she carried herself with grace and dignity." Theodora "was pretty and rather small, but extraordinarily graceful; and her charming face, with its pale, creamy coloring, was lighted up by large, vivacious, sparkling eyes." Of Theophano we are told, "her beauty was radiant, superhuman, divine." Zoë Porphyrogenita "had large eyes under heavy eyebrows, a slightly aquiline nose, and beautiful fair hair. Her complexion and her whole body were of dazzling whiteness; she was of incomparable grace and most harmoniously proportioned. She had not a single wrinkle . . . and had a very elegant figure." [Zoë was then fifty.]

After their beauty comes their talent for intrigue: this is the more easily shown, as most of them rise to the imperial dignity from obscure origin, and all of them marry husbands who—Nicephoras Phocas excepted—figure as unworthy of governing a household, let alone an Empire. Theodosius, Endocia's husband, "was a nice, young fellow, of medium height, fair with black eyes, very polite, quiet, gentle, and amiable; somewhat of a bore and a pedant; of a sedentary disposition, a feeble character and easily influenced." Justinian would twice have lost the empire but for Theodora. Theophilus, wife of the Blessed Theodora, was a weakling,—and so on. Of course the sketches of the two Byzantine Emperors are anything but flattering. Basil, founder of the Macedonian Dynasty, is "just a splendid human animal;" an illiterate peasant, enriched by the gifts of an elderly Greek widow, he finally wins the notice of the Emperor, Michael III the Drunkard, by his success in a prize-fight. He subsequently advances himself rapidly in the imperial favor by sharing with and even outdoing the Emperor in all forms of vice, until one day he murders his benefactor and usurps the throne. His successor, Leo the Wise, turns out to be weak and foolish: he promulgated a decree against third marriages and then scandalized both Church and people by marrying four times, himself.

These characters seem to belong in a "fairyland, a country virgin and unknowable," to quote M. de Voguë. In spite of the author's belief in the "scientific spirit" of his approach, somehow the book has a warmer atmosphere—almost reminding one of the "Arabian Nights." Picturesque details are not suppressed on the score of improbability. Basil's death was due to a hunting accident: the stag "caught his antlers in the sovereign's belt, lifted him bodily from the saddle . . . and carried him along for about sixteen miles." Again, "She (the Blessed Theodora) was very proud of having restored Orthodoxy. By her order, the Paulicians were given their choice between conversion and death; as they refused to yield, blood flowed freely in Asia Minor. The imperial inquisitors . . . did wonders: they succeeded in putting more than one hundred thousand of them to death by torture."

The Byzantine chronicler imitated the best Classical Greek style, but his imagination was his own and oriental. That is why it is so difficult to construct Byzantine history from contemporary chronicles.

But it is not history with which we should be here concerned. All the subjects had previously been treated in historical works by French writers, chief of whom were Rambaud, Schlumberger, and M. Diehl himself: e. g., Chapter III, on Theodora, is taken from Diehl's "Théodora"; Chapters VII to XI, on Basil, Leo, Theophano, and Zoë, parallel the fuller account of these personages in Schlumberger's "Epopée Byzantine;" etc. It was neither for historic value nor for original research that the "Figures Byzantines" was awarded the Marcelin Guérin Prize by the French Academy, but for vividness of portrayal and elegance of style.

As character drawing, two types of ambitious women—the frankly worldly and the Puritanical—are strikingly done. All the sketches are drawn from the point of view of a man of the world: pleasure, wealth, power are the center of interest. The superficial requires no such effort to understand as the metaphysical; the book is, consequently, easy reading and its appeal broad.

A Mirror to His Age

RELIQUIAE. By A. D. GODLEY. Edited by C. R. L. Fletcher. New York: Oxford University Press. 1927. $6.

Reviewed by TUCKER BROOKE
Yale University

WHEN Alfred Denis Godley, Public Orator in the University of Oxford, was himself awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters in 1919, the eminent person who for the occasion usurped Godley's office and presented him, confessed in gracious Latin the embarrassment he felt at his paradoxical position. So any reviewer of Godley's books must feel. How can language be found with which to reflect again, not too muddily, the sparkling wit and wisdom by which he held up the mirror to his age? These two posthumous volumes are as delightful reading as can well be come by, and as true an image of what was going on in the best academic minds during the last thirty-five or forty years. The only thing to do with them is to read, and having read to read again, for there is little in them that will not endure the stern test of being left upon one's bedside table.

A North Irishman by birth, classical don by vocation, conservative by politics and instinct, and a wit by the grace of Mercury, this melancholy and courtly Hellenist, who looked like Don Quixote, stands well in the tradition of Cowper, Hood, Calverley, Praed, and Procter. While he wrote the *Oxford Magazine* reached a height of brilliance that it will not easily attain again, and even *Punch* derived a special and superlative charm from the verses which bore his watched-for initials.

The volumes now edited by his Magdalen friend and colleague, Mr. C. R. L. Fletcher, give an ample and favorable impression of Godley's prolific mind. They are in prose and in verse, in English, Latin, Greek, and French: Godley could be equally witty and equally erudite in all these languages. They deal with many subjects, but especially with student life and university government, mountaineering, politics, and travel. It is their wit that will keep them alive, but they include much more than *jeux d'esprit*. There is an essay on walking trips (among others) which can hold its own with Hazlitt; and there are studies of special subjects—such as the papers on Greek topics and the incisive essays on Victorian literature—which, savory though the style is to the mere taster, really demand to be chewed and digested.

The University of Washington (Seattle) Chapbooks have now come into existence with the publication of "A Short View of Menckenism" (in Menckenese) by Joseph B. Harrison. Glenn Hughes is the editor of the series.

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Argentine Literature

By Hermine Hallam Hipwell

LOOKING back on the literary production of the last twelve months it may well be said that never before have novelists, poets, and essayists, been so busy in Argentina. The publishing houses have poured forth a continuous stream of paper bound volumes, by known and unknown writers, bidding fair to rival within a very short time the avalanche of new books which yearly smothers reviewers in America and Europe.

The reasons for this sudden activity are various, the most important being the wholesale translation of foreign works, particularly light, semi-adventurous novels, and the ever increasing number of magazines as well as the very fine Sunday supplements of the leading dailies. A taste for reading having thus been encouraged among lower and middle-class Argentines it is only natural that the rising generation of authors should promptly respond to it. It is quite true that the taste is as yet neither very elevated nor discriminating, but the taste and the demand for reading matter are there, a powerful stimulus to the young writer out to conquer the world.

Among the considerable list of best sellers published this season it is interesting to note that only a few of Argentina's foremost novelists figure, the majority of the authors in favor at the present moment being comparatively young and unknown writers.

On glancing through the year's most salient novels there is immediately noticeable a greater attention to plot than is usual with Argentine novelists; a fact well worth commenting on when it is considered how utterly lacking in even the most elementary plot were most of the distinguished novels published in this country during the last decade.

More subjective in their attitude to life than Anglo-Saxon writers the Argentines will always remain, since the very syntax, the long, involved sentences and flowing periods, incline the writer to lay undue stress upon his slightest observation. The public, however, is slowly becoming tired of morbid dissections and lengthy analyses, hazy atmospheres, and neurotic characters, and insists on being entertained by stories which will hold its attention from start to finish. In most countries such a state of affairs would justify sharp criticism but here, in Argentina, where until very lately literary activity was confined to a small group of authors with an extremely limited circle of readers, all the arts, including literature, are in a state of transition. That this new taste of the public's is being gratified by the rising generation of writers is quite clearly shown by the latest novels. There are one or two notable exceptions, the most important being "Zogoibi," by Enrique Larreta.

* *

The book purports to be a detailed and careful study of a young Argentine landowner, Federico de Ahumada, a weak, romantic, dreamer incapable of anything save vague longings for the unknown and therefore glamorous life of Europe's most famous capitals. He lives on his *estancia* in the heart of the *pampa* lands, surrounded by a little court of friends and toadies, while the girl to whom he is secretly engaged dwells a couple of miles away from him under the guardianship of three maiden aunts who resent the young man's suit. This resentment leads Ahumada to dally with a mysterious woman, the wife of an American in the vicinity. Dalliance is followed by passionate avowals of love, furtive meetings in a deserted hovel, and finally by tragedy when Ahumada stabs by mistake the object of his first tenderness come to reproach him for his faithlessness.

There are some fair descriptions of the *pampa* in the book, a clever character sketch of an Andalucian priest ruling his mixed and rebellious flock of *gauchos*, half-breeds, and immigrant laborers, with a firm yet gently humorous kindness, and the rest is but a medley of lurid and highly colored pictures of life on what must have been a rather remarkable *estancia*. Unfortunately the writer of this very mediocre novel is a man who in the past has produced very able work and moreover belongs by birth to one of the leading families in Buenos Aires society. These facts seem to have influenced the outlook of local critics who one and all declared the book to be a masterpiece.

Far more interesting, and in its way representative of the work being done by some of the younger novelists, is Luís María Jordán's pleasing novel, "La Bambina." This book is an accurate and delicate description of life in one of the small fishing villages on the South Atlantic coast. The principal character in the novel is Maria Teresa, the young, city-bred wife of the leading store-keeper, a rough, uncouth, and hard working, Spaniard. She is the daughter of honest, conscientious, laborers but during the year of frenzied love when she had been the adored girl mistress of a boy belonging to a wealthy family, she has known all the refinements of civilization, and life in the village is at first heartbreakingly difficult. How she learns to appreciate the calm monotony of the life about her, the manly qualities, the tenderness and sincerity of her husband, how the past recedes until it is little more than a glamorous dream, are ably told by the author who has depicted in Maria Teresa a type not uncommon among the Argentine lower classes. The writer's style is clear and forceful and the account of the gossiping, bickering, community with its various nationalities, both clever and exact.

Equally interesting to the student of Argentine novel-writing are the works of Hector Olivera Lavié, and his latest collection of long short stories entitled, "La Edad de Amar," is a very fair example of this author's style. Lavié in his earlier books proclaimed himself a harsh realist, and though traces of his at one time uncompromising attitude are still to be found in the present volume they have been toned down until they are little more than a sharp flavor imparting vigor to his observations. Of the four stories which go to make up the book perhaps the best is "Fernanda," a delicate study of devotion and sacrifice. In "La Captura" the author gives his reader a vivid description of the capture of a bandit in the grass lands of Corrientes.

* *

Totally different from the foregoing books is Hector Blomberg's "Los Pajaros que Lloran," another of the season's successes. This book contains a series of sketches dealing with the neighboring republic of Paraguay during the years immediately following upon the war with Brazil and Argentina. Those were days when no able bodied man was to be found in the whole length and breadth of the land, when women and children led the last attacks upon the enemy, and whole provinces kept themselves alive on oranges and forest fruit. Days of heroism, terrible because of its utter futility, of sacrifice which gained nothing but an exhausted peace, of ruin viisting a land which once, under the rule of a tyrant, sought to rival the luxury and magnificence of Europe's oldest and most powerful nations. And of those dreams all that is left are unfinished palaces, opera houses, and cathedrals, primeval jungle encroaching upon what once were pleasure gardens and, in the depths of the forests, the white skeletons high up in the trees, the survivors of pitched battles whom fear had driven to take refuge high above the ground and hunger mercilessly killed while the writhing snakes watched and waited and the jaguars prowled underfoot. Those far off days whose influence is still felt in Paraguay are stirringly described by Blomberg to whom all the melancholy of a race which Fate has unceasingly pursued appears by reason of its tragic history lit up fitfully by acts of glorious heroism and noble sacrifice.

A review of the year's books would be incomplete without mention of two distinctly clever volumes of critical essays, both by assistant editors of *La Nacion*. "El Burro de Maruf," by Arturo Cancela, the author of the "Tres Relatos Porteños," deals with philosophy, pedagogy, and politics, from the point of view of a clever writer a trifle disdainful of his public, delighting now and again to point out his own superior intellectual accomplishments. "La Asamblea de la Bohardilla," by Alberto Gerchunoff, is a delightful collection of historical sketches, satirical and delicate, in which the author displays all the treasures of his paradoxical yet wholly pleasing style.

In attempting a life of Jesus (Paris: Flammarion) written in the first person Henri Barbusse has set himself a task which from its inception was foreordained to failure. To make his Christ live up to the nobility of His sayings in the Bible was more than he could hope to do, and yet in making his life of Jesus autobiographical he challenges comparison with the language of the New Testament. Moreover, no biographer of Christ is a free agent; any divergences from the Biblical text are at once apparent, and are sure either to shock or annoy. One or the other, this book will inevitably do.

New Books from Beacon Hill

"Gone" Chinese!

*SUN AND MOON

by VINCENT·H·GOWEN

The passionate history of an English girl whose father "went" Chinese. The author has an astounding fund of knowledge of Chinese life. $2.50

THEIR TRADITION
By Guy Rawlence
"A great aunt—probably the greatest aunt in fiction—is the supreme figure. A wonderful creation."—*Punch.* $2.00

*BROTHER JOHN
A Tale of the First Franciscans
By Vida D. Scudder
Particularly appropriate during this celebration of the seventh centenary of St. Francis' birth. $2.50

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
By Stephen McKenna
The second volume in Mr. McKenna's masterly trilogy of life in changing England. $2.50

*AN AMERICAN SAGA
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One of the most important autobiographies in years. Hardly to be matched in fiction. $2.50

*AN AIDE-DE-CAMP OF LEE:
The Papers of Colonel Charles Marshall
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"The most important work on General Robert E. Lee since the appearance of General Maurice's earlier volume."
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With 19 illustrations and 8 maps. $4.00

DISRAELI
By D. L. Murray
"This is the best short biography of Disraeli that has yet been written, and it would be difficult to write a better."—*The Liverpool Post.*
"A first-rate piece of work, vividly imagined, soundly planned and admirably written."—*Philip Guedalla, author of "Palmerston."* $4.00

*POOLS AND RIPPLES
By Bliss Perry
Delightful essays on fishing, written with enthusiasm and rare humor. $2.00

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Describes the history, types, colors and methods of making rugs by hand. 38 illustrations, including 4 in color. $3.00

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By Ella Porter McKinney
An enthusiastic book by an authority on iris. $1.75

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LITTLE, BROWN & COMPANY
Publishers, Boston

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The Best of the New Books

THE RISE OF AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

By Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard

Third Large Printing

This entitralling story of America's making has been unanimously acclaimed as the "ideal history for the layman." William Allen White calls it "a history that any citizen can read without boredom—the kind of history that sensible, practical men can read." Wars and politics of the usual history are displaced by a balanced account of our national growth and culture. No one who wants to understand his age can afford to miss this book, which is not so much a history as it is a piquantly fresh interpretation.

2 vols., illustrated, $12.50

A New Poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson

Tristram

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"The greatest poem that has yet been written in America" has, through its sheer quality and beauty, won an immediate place on every important best-seller list in America. You'll find no more satisfying reading in the bookstalls. $1.50

The Life of the Author of "The American Commonwealth"

James Bryce

By the Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher

"Admirable biography . . . The work is exceedingly well done. many pages are deep with charm . . All throw a white light on the author of *The American Commonwealth*."—Claude G. Bowers in the *New York World*.

2 vols. $8.00

Islanders

A New Novel by Helen Hull

Fourth Large Printing

"A deeply significant cross section of life . . . Islanders is one of the highly notable novels of 1927. It would take that rank in any year."—*Philadelphia Inquirer*. $2.50

Autobiographies

By William Butler Yeats

The story of Yeats' life which "offers such a variety of riches that I can hardly see how anyone could fail to enjoy it. This is a book to own, to read, and read again."—*New York Evening Post*. $3.50

Dear Old Templeton

A New Novel by Alice Brown

"A novel of worth and substance. There is beauty in its conception and rare charm in its execution. One of the most charmingly written, the soundest and most worthwhile novels of many seasons."—*Boston Herald*. $2.50

Your Money's Worth

By Stuart Chase and F. J Schlink

The amazing revelations of this book take you behind the scenes of Big Business and Advertising and show you why you rarely get value for what you pay. It is recommended by Dr. Henry Seidel Canby, Dorothy Canfield and other noted critics. *To Be Published July 5*. $2.00

This Believing World

By Lewis Browne

Eighth Large Printing

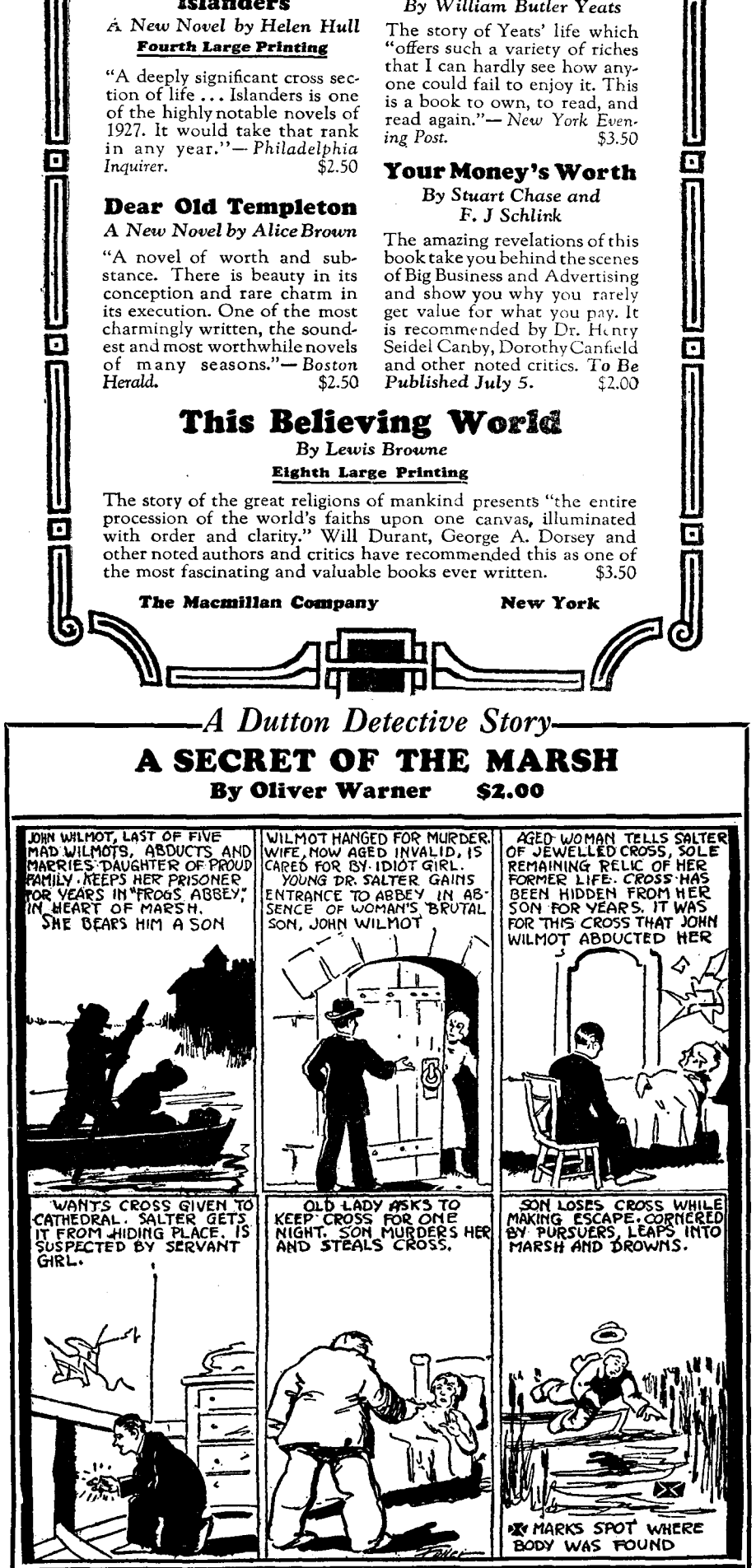
The story of the great religions of mankind presents "the entire procession of the world's faiths upon one canvas, illuminated with order and clarity." Will Durant, George A. Dorsey and other noted authors and critics have recommended this as one of the most fascinating and valuable books ever written. $3.50

The Macmillan Company **New York**

A Dutton Detective Story

A SECRET OF THE MARSH

By Oliver Warner $2.00


JOHN WILMOT, LAST OF FIVE MAD WILMOTS, ABDUCTS AND MARRIES DAUGHTER OF PROUD FAMILY. KEEPS HER PRISONER FOR YEARS IN "FROGS ABBEY," IN HEART OF MARSH. SHE BEARS HIM A SON
WILMOT HANGED FOR MURDER. WIFE, NOW AGED INVALID, IS CARED FOR BY IDIOT GIRL. YOUNG DR. SALTER GAINS ENTRANCE TO ABBEY IN ABSENCE OF WOMAN'S BRUTAL SON, JOHN WILMOT
AGED WOMAN TELLS SALTER OF JEWELLED CROSS, SOLE REMAINING RELIC OF HER FORMER LIFE. CROSS HAS BEEN HIDDEN FROM HER SON FOR YEARS. IT WAS FOR THIS CROSS THAT JOHN WILMOT ABDUCTED HER
WANTS CROSS GIVEN TO CATHEDRAL. SALTER GETS IT FROM HIDING PLACE. IS SUSPECTED BY SERVANT GIRL.
OLD LADY ASKS TO KEEP CROSS FOR ONE NIGHT. SON MURDERS HER AND STEALS CROSS.
SON LOSES CROSS WHILE MAKING ESCAPE. CORNERED BY PURSUERS, LEAPS INTO MARSH AND DROWNS.
✖ MARKS SPOT WHERE BODY WAS FOUND

A unique and unusual review of this new detective story, drawn by Fuller, a feature artist of murder scenes.

Points of View

Skeat to Murray

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review:*

SIR:

Since the world is said to be now exulting in the completion of the Oxford Dictionary (though I have not yet received my copy of the finishing section), somebody ought to revive the verses W. W. Skeat sent to Murray.

Murray, you remember, did all the work of editor-in-chief himself on the first volumes. Then he started Bradley in to be responsible for the letter E. Bradley finished E and went on with F. When Murray finished D he decided that instead of taking up G he would let Bradley have the FG volume to himself and would begin on H. Thereupon Skeat wrote:

I'm glad you are done—so I hear you say—
With words that begin with D,
And have left H.B. to be Glad and Gay
With the Glory that waits on G,
While you laugh Ha, Ha! defying fate,
As you tackle the terrible aspirate,
The H that appals the Cockney crew,
Lancashire, Essex, and Shropshire too.
For they canot abide the Hunter's Horn,
And hold e'en Heavenly Hosts in scorn.
And I fear there are some who could hardly say
Why you didn't give Hat when you worked on A,
Whose utterance leaves a doubt between
The human Hair and an Air serene,
The Harrow that creeps and the Arrow that flies,
The Heels where chilblains are wont to rise
And the nice fat Eels that are baked in pies!
We all rejoice, this New Year's Day,
To Honor and Happiness, Hope and Health—
I would you were nearer to Worldly Wealth.

Of course Skeat knew the whole world of scholarship would echo the wish that the work was nearer the end of the alphabet. But Skeat could not have foreseen that he was defining the end-point of the whole; that after X and Y and Z had for years been in hand, the word Worldly would hold off to the very last instalment.

STEVEN T. BYINGTON.

Ballard Vale, Mass.

Gertrude Bell

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

SIR:

It chances that of late I have been trekking through Syria and Iraq with Gertrude Lowthian Bell, in "Syria, The Desert and The Sown" and "Amurath to Amurath," delighting in her quick personality, keen vision, sound learning, her passion for ancient beauty, her delicate awareness to peoples and individuals. Gertrude Lowthian Bell's pamphlets and other books are more especially pabulum for Near and Middle East archeologists, and scholar-enthusiasts. The volumes I have mentioned are meant for every true lover of life and letters.

Miss Bell, as you remember, died in her beloved Baghdad July 11th last year. Curiously enough, the very day news of her passing appeared in New York newspapers, I was spending the morning with a woman who had seen not a little of her in Haroun's and Feisal's capital. She told me of her first glimpse of her in the Foreign Office of Iraq, where the seal of this new kingdom was in the process of choosing. The choosing appeared to be in the hand of Miss Bell, for when an English gentleman mildly suggested that the King might have an opinion on the subject, she replied very firmly that she "was quite sure His Majesty would prefer her choice."

There was also a little tale of high tea in the Queen's apartments, where nevertheless Her English Ladyship seemed to command the board, and an epical story of a great gathering of Arab Sheikhs at Baghdad,—her dream and deed.

Perhaps more than any other non-Arab, Gertrude Bell was versed in the lore and politics of the Northern Arab tribal units. As traveller, spy, government official, she had won the admiration and friendship of their sheiks by matching ancient proverbs and quoting poets of The Ignorance, about many a coffee-redolent camp fire. The Iraqi Arab and English officials leaned upon her knowledge, tribal ties and astuteness, when it came to steering the newly launched ship of state.

Some think Gertrude Lowthian Bell's finest bit of achievement was putting-over the Kingdom of Iraq, her tireless devotion to its welfare and place in the Great Society. Yet she will be held longest in remembrance, not as Nation-Builder, but Friend Extraordinary to the Arab people, and after that, as linguist, archeologist, traveller, and author.

How many care to remember that before she turned to the Arabic language, lore, and literature, Miss Bell was known as a Persian scholar? Do they care to remember her translation of Hafiz, with its fine comparison of the Persian poet and Dante? The late Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge calls her translation "the most skilful attempt to render accessible to English readers, the works of this poet" and "poetry of a very high order."

But if you blindly eschew Hafiz, if you have taken upon yourself a vow never to read a volume which bulks 359 pages, as I must confess "Amurath to Amurath" bulks, so be it. But really, it is a pity that any man should miss "Syria, Desert and Sown," when his heart also might leap "at the sight of such lonely and unravished beauty."

MARY FLEMING LARABEE.

Lincoln University, Pa.

Notes on a Review

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review:*

SIR:

In your issue of June 11 there is an unsigned review of my anthology "The Answering Voice, One Hundred Love Lyrics by Women." The article contains some appreciative comments, some criticism, and one or two inaccuracies. The critic seems to assume that this is a new book. It was published in 1917, as the copyright proves. As the present edition was brought out in a new format and by a different publisher, a few copies were sent out for review. The publisher assures me that a letter stating that the book is a reprint was furnished to each publication receiving a copy. This letter as well as the date of the copyright seems to have escaped the notice of the critic, who takes me to task for the omission of Elinor Wylie and Leonora Speyer, and for using too little of the work of Edna Millay. Elinor Wylie's first book, "Nets to Catch the Wind," did not appear until 1921, four years after "The Answering Voice," and the first books by Edna Millay and by Leonora Speyer also post-dated the anthology. If a new and enlarged edition were published, I hope that I should be allowed the privilege of quoting from their work.

In a book containing only one hundred poems by sixty-six authors, as mine does, it is inevitable that the whole field of English and American literature cannot be covered. As very few memorable love poems by women were written in English before the middle of the last century, that date, as the foreword states, was made the starting point. Two or three fine older poems were admitted as exceptions. The reviewer regrets the omission of certain poems written before the middle of the last century, "The Land o' the Leal," "Ca' the yowes to the knowes," and "My Mother bids me bind my hair," and says: "It is perhaps kinder to attribute their absence to Sara Teasdale's carelessness rather than to her taste." These poems are well known to all lovers of poetry, being in every large anthology, and as they fell outside of the strict limits that I had set mystelf, I reluctantly omitted them.

One word more: the critic speaks of "the grossly disproportionate preponderance here of the American women poets over their English contemporaries." There are one hundred poems in all in the book. Thirty-two of these are by English and Scotch women. There are also poems by Irish women and one by a Canadian. I have just come upon a sentence from the Rev. Alexander Dyce, quoted by J. C. Squire in the delightful preface to his anthology, "A Book of Women's Verse" (Oxford 1921). The sentence reads: "The inglorious toils of compilation seldom excite the gratitude of readers." And happening upon this at a time when it seemed to fit my mood, it occurred to me to see how Mr. Squire had dealt with the difficult question of the proportion of the work of British and American women. His anthology is not limited to any one theme, and he has included authors from Anne Askewe (1520-1546) down to the date of publication, 1921. One hundred and seventy-nine poems by seventy-nine poets are included in Mr. Squire's book. Out of this number only seven poems by five poets are by Americans! The five American poets singled out for this distinction are Anne Bradstreet, Phoebe Cary, Rose Terry Cooke, Julia Ward Howe, and Emma Willard!

SARA TEASDALE.

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The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be reviewed later.

Belles Lettres

THE PEOPLE AND THE BOOK. Edited by ARTHUR S. PEAKE. Oxford University Press. 1925. $3.50.

A series of fifteen essays on the Old Testament by outstanding British scholars renders a valuable service to any who wish to know the latest developments in the study of the Hebrew scriptures. There is condensed into this single volume a vast amount of information, but it is quite readable rather than encyclopedic. Special attention is paid to the relation of the Old Testament to other cultures, in history (by H. R. Hall), in religion (by A. Cook), and in language (by G. R. Driver). Four essays deal with the religion of Israel in its development (W. F. Lofthouse, A. S. Peake, W. E. Barnes, W. O. E. Oesterley). The relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament and to the religious development of mankind is dealt with by G. H. Box and R. H. Kennett respectively. An admirable essay on Hebrew Psychology —the kind of thing which is not to be found anywhere else—is contributed by H. Wheeler Robinson. There are papers on the methods of Old Testament study by T. H. Robinson, J. E. McFadyen, G. B. Gray, and the late I. Abrahams. Abrahams wrote on the Jewish Interpretation of the Old Testament. Professor Gray's paper was his presidential address before the Society for Old Testament Study. It is this Society whose members supplied all the essays and it is to Professor Gray's memory that they are dedicated.

Education

THE STORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE. By ALGERNON TASSIN and ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE. Macmillan. 1927. $2.

This book was originally published four years ago, after the papers of which it is composed had appeared from week to week in serial form. The new edition is attractive, with decorations by Maurice Day and others. For young and even for older readers here is a sound and interesting primer of our literary background. The story ends with the end of the nineteenth century. The twentieth is not touched. We should think that this book would be an excellent one introduced into schools to acquaint growing minds with the vista and perspective of our native letters.

Fiction

LEOPATRA'S PRIVATE DIARY. By HENRY THOMAS. Boston: The Stratford Company. 1927. $2.

The blame for this be upon Mr. John Erskine's head, though he had, actually, nothing to do with it. This is not, to us, a gay satire. Any sly naughtiness about it leaves us cold. Cleopatra may be interpreted to us moderns, but, frankly, we found her an awful bore. Mr. Erskine himself could have done her a thousand times better, with a great deal more subtlety, and, of course, with a certain amount of scholarship in the thing. But we do think that "The Private Life of Helen of Troy" suggested that somebody should resurrect Cleopatra for the foundlings, and here she is. We suppose it was inevitable, but her resurrection in this instance is not a success. We should rather turn to John Kendrick Bangs

WEDDING. By MELVIN P. LEVY. New York: The Unicorn Press, 5 East 57th Street. 1927. $2.

No less a critic than Robert Morss Lovett in *The New Republic* was complimentary of Mr. Levy's earlier novel, "Matrix." The present one, "Wedding," has for us extraordinary flashes, such as the reverie upon the crucifixion that assails Edward in the core of the holy figures, and Chapter Seven, concerning Norma. There is the usual preoccupation with unimportant and rather fusty detail which seems to be such a feather in the cap of our naturalists old or new. On the other hand some of the frankness is significant. The story is averagely dreary and experimentally muddled. There is no use of structure, and at times the style is lamentable. Which may or may not be the "new and great method in literature" of which the jacket flap speaks. Our guess is that it isn't. Mr. Levy is often far too preoccupied with trivialities, far too laborious over nothing very much. The story of Edward's father in Chapter Three really comes to nothing very much, and Edward trifling with a Cummings book thereafter is pathological but uninteresting. Sherwood Anderson is really responsible for such empty soap-bubble writing, even though he is also a master. He has often indulged himself in dumb brooding that was altogether too dumb, and he has infected his disciples with it. But we return to Mr. Levy's flashes of power and sympathetic insight. They are occasional only, but in them lies our hope for him.

MOSQUITOES. By WILLIAM FAULKNER. Boni & Liveright. 1927. $2.50.

First let it be said that Mr. Faulkner has a remarkable literary gift. He can write. At times he can write with extraordinarily acute observation. His "Soldier's Pay," we understand, was a good war novel. "Mosquitoes," though dealing with people most of whom we detested, has some remarkable passages. As to the characters, the young men, the nephew and Pete, are very good. Jenny and the niece, especially in their conversation in the cabin together, are a decided success. Jenny is, in fact, a triumph. Gordon, the artist, starts in the foreground and then the writer forgets him till the end, comparatively. Some of the more serious conversations bored us, and Mr. Faulkner has the bad habit of intruding gratuitously irrelevancies more than tawdry. He also keeps repeating a sentence describing Jenny's sex-appeal (to use modern parlance) at which we groaned. It is florid, not particularly true, and certainly not worth repetition. Mr. Talliaferro's frustrated amorousness also becomes rather a burden. With the other human mosquitoes the author deals with adequate differentiation on their four days' dreary yachting trip. The wastage of life in futility, the futile beauty of youth, the oppression of adult triviality, emerge strongly. But the book is wistful and poetic as well as sophisticatedly cynical and naturalistic. And often the conversation is extremely good. The vulgarity of these people is convincing. The italics and the intermittent drift into fine writing tend to be oppressive. And yet, for all our strictures, we recognize a real pulse of life in the book. It is distinctly a cut above the average novel.

EVELYN GRAINGER. By GEORGE F. HUMMEL. Boni & Liveright. 1927. $2.50.

Mr. Hummel's earlier work has been the kind that one remembers dimly. Always with that remembrance was the feeling that some day he would write an important novel. But with "Evelyn Grainger" doubt sets in, and substantial success for him seems much further away than it did upon the publication of, say, "Subsoil" or "A Good Man." There are two tremendous difficulties in his path: his inability to create a narrative that moves economically and purposefully, and his over-emphasis upon sex and sexual matters of all sorts. Mr. Hummel not only indulges in esthetic crudity; he violates the canons of good taste. After a few hours with "Evelyn Grainger" this reviewer read chapters in Rabelais and Ben Hecht and felt himself by contrast in a fresh, rain-clean, sunny world.

The novel is the pseudo-realistic chronicle of a woman's life with two husbands and a lover, a life that is struggling to find some rational and emotional basis for happiness. The prefix "pseudo" indicates a realism that is more faithful to prevailing prejudices and current notions than to the constant stream of life itself. Mr. Hummel's effort to portray a woman's inner being is pale and distorted when compared with the accomplishments of either Frank Swinnerton or Ellen Glasgow; the reader with perceptions will feel that this novelist tackled a job for which he was unfitted. The net result is a novel of some scope and probable honesty, the monotony and obesity of which are only temporarily checked by Mr. Hummel's interest in things better left unmentioned.

THE BAD SAMARITAN. By JUSTIN STURM. Harpers. 1927. $2.

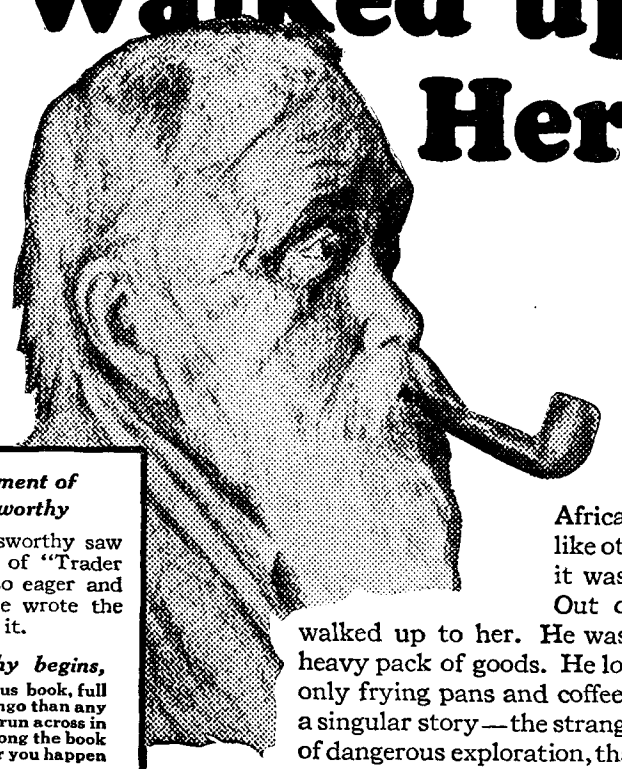
We were, at first, mildly amused by this light novel. It was rather graceful and pleasant, though it leaped from point to point with what seemed to us extraordinarily large gaps in between. Still, the silly touches weren't so bad. But it blew up in the stretch. Having got his hero and heroine in love, the author had to solve the problem of the heroine's husband, and what a fist he made of it! The ending strikes us as preposterous, nothing less. Mr. Sturm can do a passage such as the lovelorn swain's outing with a girl who is only present in his own fantastic mind quite freshly and charmingly. He sometimes labors his little jokes, to be sure, but his pen is lively. But that ending! So Dick bought the stock back did he? And has anything the author ever said led us to believe that Dick could possibly have the money wherewith to buy it back. Not a thing. Mr. Sturm's trouble—or one trouble—is a flagrant omission of connecting links. He doesn't know how to construct a novel. Aside from that we like his touch on some of his material.

PEACOCK HOUSE and Other Mysteries. By EDEN PHILLPOTTS. Macmillan. 1927. $2.50.

Tales of horror and mystery may be so hauntingly inexplicable as to leave the reader speculating and shuddering long after the book has been laid aside. Or, like

(*Continued on next page*)

this Old Man Walked up to Her Door!



The Excitement of John Galsworthy

When John Galsworthy saw the manuscript of "Trader Horn" he was so eager and absorbed that he wrote the introduction for it.

Mr. Galsworthy begins,

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The New Books

Fiction

(*Continued from preceding page*)

the common detective story, they may be builded with mathematical neatness to reveal in a surprising conclusion the simple explanation for all the unsolved enigmas that have gone before. The short stories in "Peacock House" belong, with one or two exceptions, to the second category. They are competently manœuvred and one of them—"Red Dragon"—has color and a capital climax. For the most part, however, the people involved are too dull to stimulate much interest in their crimes or hallucinations, and somehow even the most fiendish of their murders seem more inky than bloody.

DIVOTS. By P. G. WODEHOUSE. Doran. 1927. $2.50.

In "Divots," a collection of nine short stories, Mr. Wodehouse is amusing more often than he is tiresome; his mood and attitude are without variation, with the result that sometimes his writing is thin, and sometimes flat. In no case is there anything beyond an occasional ludicrous situation or farcial encounter for us to hold in memory after we have finished the volume. One thing, though, he has accomplished. He has set a detailed scene for his grave fooling, a scene of which the chief properties are the humors of the tee and the fairway, the eccentricities of the human animal turned golfer, and the abstruse jargon of the players. Probably the reader who knows a mashie from a green will laugh more often with Mr. Wodehouse than the layman will, but that difference in sensitiveness is inevitable. The non-golfer is doomed to miss the points of certain esoteric jokes and be bored by an apparent repetition of *motif*. But in spite of this limitation "Divots" will not lessen Mr. Wodehouse's reputation as a humorist; even though it possesses little distinction, it is urbane and intelligent.

THE ABSOLUTE AT LARGE. By *Karel Capek*. Macmillan. $2.50.

THE SON OF THE GRAND EUNUCH. By *Charles Pettit*. Boni & Liveright. $3.

I THINK I REMEMBER. By *Cleone Knox*. Appleton. $2.

MISS MINERVA'S SCALLYWAGS. By *Emma Speed Sampson*. Reilly & Lee.

THE MALLETTS. By *C. H. Young*. Harcourt, Brace. $2.

SPRING BANJO. By *Horatio Winslow*. Frank Maurice. $2.

THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYITCH. By *Leo Tolstoy*. Dodd, Mead. $3.

POR O' MOONSHINE. By *Albert Frederick Wilson*. Dodd, Mead. $2.

THE RETURN OF BLACKSHIRT. By *Bruce Graeme*. Dodd, Mead. $2.

GREYMARSH. By *Arthur J. Rees*. Dodd, Mead. $2.

THE ELLERBY CASE. By *John Rode*. Dodd, Mead. $2.

RODERICK RANDOM. By *Tobias Smollett* (Everyman's Library). Dutton. 80 cents.

"AW HELL." By *Clarke Venable*. Reilly & Lee.

THE WOLF PACK. By *Ridgwell Cullum*. Lippincott. $2.

SELECTED WORKS OF LOUIS LIPSKY. Nesler Publishing Co. 3 vols.

THE WEEK-END LIBRARY. Doubleday, Page. $2.50 net.

SUSAN OF THE STORM. By *Grace Miller White*. Macaulay. $2.

ARSENE LUPIN. By *Maurice Le Blanc*. Macaulay. $2.

History

LIFE AND WORK IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE. By P. BOISSONNADE. Translated, with an introduction, by EILEEN POWER. Knopf. 1927. $5.

To those who still think of the Middle Ages as an epoch of stagnation and gloom, this volume should bring both illumination and information. Based upon a wide view as well as upon much detailed knowledge, it traces the course of social and economic evolution throughout the medieval period, with due reference to the survival of ancient culture in the eastern Mediterranean as well as to the revival of economic life in the West and its spread to northern and northeastern Europe. There is also due recognition of the rise of the new social classes, especially the laboring classes; indeed the Middle Ages are pronounced the most important period "in the universal history of labor before the great changes witnessed by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." M. Boissonnade's book has a further advantage for the Anglo-American reader in giving a European perspective to the economic life of an epoch which is often studied from a purely English point of view, regardless of the fact that, as Miss Power points out, England was then on an economic backwater. Nevertheless, M. Boissonnade can best be read in conjunction with some sketch of the economic history of England or some other one country, for his cross-sections sometimes obscure the processes of development, which are clearer when studied in a single region. Moreover, so compact a volume is full of questionable generalizations and doubtful statistics of population and prices, and the reader gets a false impression of certainty in a field where much is open to debate and further investigation. The excellent English version is accompanied by an admirable topical index and by eight well chosen plates, including that finest of monuments of medieval urban life, the great Hall of Ypres which was destroyed in 1914.

THE EARLIEST TIMES. By FR. FUNCK-BRENTANO. Translated from the French by E. F. BUCKLEY. Putnam. 1927. $3.50.

The first volume in M. Funck-Brentano's "National—and Nationalistic—History of France" is less fortunate than its successor which carries the story on from the tenth century. The author has little first-hand knowledge of the earlier period, and his work is largely a compilation from other French writers. A more serious defect is his strong Gallic chauvinism, which gives the work a fiercely anti-Roman and anti-German bias: "The truth is—and it cannot be too often or too loudly and emphatically repeated—the truth is that French civilization, modern civilization, is essentially a Gallic civilization, born from the fusion of the two elements of Celt and Ligurian." If only the author's loud and emphatic repetitions could make this true! Not only does he stress the persistence of the Gallic stock, for which there is much to be said, but he also glorifies the culture of pre-Roman Gaul and takes away from the Romans even the credit of delaying the German invasions. So it is "foolishness" for the Germans to claim Charlemagne, who is made out half Gallo-Roman by blood and whose glory finally shone forth across the Rhine "owing to the circulation of the French epics by means of the French bards who sang of Charlemagne, Rolando (sic!), and the twelve peers." The reader who really wants to understand the origins of France will fail to find sure guidance here. If he be a foreign reader, he will also be confused by the many place-names which have their natural justification in the French edition, while at the same time he will wish a full description of that "tireless soil" which has gone to the making of this tireless race and has been so well studied by French writers on human geography.

BUILDERS OF THE REPUBLIC. By *Frederic Austin Ogg*. (Pageant of America.) Yale University Press.

THE AMERICAN SPIRIT IN ART. By *Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., Charles Rufus Morey* and *William James Henderson*. (Pageant of America.) Yale University Press.

HISTORY OF YABALLA III. By *James A. Montgomery*. Columbia University Press. $2.

A HISTORY OF EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY. By *R. B. Mowat*. Longmans, Green. $6.25.

THE DEFENSE OF PIEDMONT. By *Spencer Wilkinson*. Oxford University Press. $1.

TWENTIETH CENTURY EUROPE. By *Preston W. Slosson*. Houghton Mifflin. $6.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE FALKLAND ISLANDS. By *Julius Goebel*. Yale University Press. $

A HUNDRED WONDERFUL YEARS. By *Mrs. S. Peel*. Dodd, Mead. $3.50.

THE RUSSIAN IMPERIAL CONSPIRACY. By *Robert L. Owen*. A. & C. Boni. $2.

HISTORY OF EUROPE. By *Chester Penn Hight*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.25.

Miscellaneous

GUGGENHEIM. By HAYDIE EAMES and MADELEINE MARSHALL. Simon Schuster. 1927. $1.

The next social inquiry is bound to be "Do you Guggenheim?" There are already likely to be such remarks concerning it as "My dear, it's a panic!" "Guggenheim" is the old parlor amusement of "Categories" which you may or may not have played. You write down a five letter word arranging the letters in vertical sequence. You draw cross-lines from each letter and form verticals across them. Thus, opposite each letter you have five empty spaces. You have these rows of spaces whatever you conceive as most brilliant, "Electrical Devices," "Courtesans," "American Humorists," whatever. Say your keyword is "Bears"; you have to think of five electrical devices beginning with B, E, A, R, and S—and so on. You are given fifteen minutes to work in your cross-hatchings. And it takes you all of that and then we are about a half a dozen shy. We never will believe it scores some of the famous people got in this sport. Even if Louis Marshall is an authority on Constitutional Law, over a dead body will you convince us that he rated one hundred per cent. It's a good game and a good successor to the Cross Word Puzzle. It may sweep the country who knows? It lowers our own *morale* but then who are we among so many?

Poetry

PEARSON'S POEMS. By JAMES LARKIN PEARSON. Boomer, N. C.: Published by the Author. 1927. $2.10.

This Tarheel poet was born in 1879 in a log cabin on the top of Berry's Mountain about three miles from Boomer, N. C. He says in his preface that he only "got" six months schooling from first to last." At the age of twenty-one, after working on a farm up to that time, he entered a printing office. He has printed this book of his with his own hands.

His preface is naïve and genuine. He is simple and forthright. His poems are printed in chronological order. The first was written at the age of twelve. The latest poems show a distinct and great improvement over the earlier. Rustic dialect pieces such as "Burnin' Off" and "Goin' Away" are good of their kind. "Lincoln" is a vigorous poem. "The Grave-Tree" simple and strong; such a poem of 1920 as "We Ain't A-Goin' To Have No War" is pungent and sardonic straight-talk from the plain man. "Honeysuckles" has an appealing simplicity, "Homer in a Garden," praised by the poet Samuel Loveman, is a fine performance technically. "The Valley of Tears," though reminiscent, is moving. These we mention as striking us as the best. There is, however, a great deal of doggerel also. The writer has always had a natural facility in rhythm and rhyme.

Religion

LIFE CHANGES. By *Harold Begbie*. Putnam. $1.50.

WORLD'S STRANGE RELIGIONS. By *Trevelyan Miller*. New York: Thompson Barlow. 6 vols. $3.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS. By *George W. Thornton*. Bobbs-Merrill. $1.50.

ROADS FROM EDEN. By *Lew Liu Luh*. New York: A. G. Seiler, 1224 Amsterdam Avenue.

WAS JESUS AN HISTORICAL PERSON? By *Elwood Worcester*. Oxford University Press. $1. net.

A HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE. By *M. L. Margolis* and *Alexander Marx*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America.

MAN AND SOCIETY. By *George Milton Janes*. Menasha, Wisc.: George Banta Pub. Co. $1.25.

RELIGION AND ART IN ASHANTI. By *Capt. S. Rattray*. Oxford University Press. $10.

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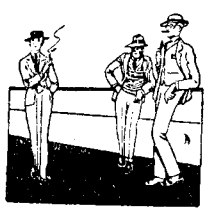

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The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the selection of books and questions of like nature should be addressed to MRS. BECKER, c/o *The Saturday Review.*

A BALANCED RATION

GIANTS IN THE EARTH. By *O. E. Rölvaag.* (Harpers).

THE NEXT AGE OF MAN. By *Albert Edward Wiggam.* (Bobbs-Merrill).

THE RENASCENCE OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY. By *Charles Homer Haskins.* (Harvard University Press).

L. A. K., Brooklyn, N. Y., is to be a secretary to an executive when his course in shorthand and typing is completed; he asks for books on general secretarial work, to supplement this course.

"AN ANALYSIS OF SECRETARIAL DUTIES AND TRAITS," by Charters and Whiteley (Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore, 1924), has been recommended to me for this purpose, also "How to Become a Company Secretary," by E. J. Hammond (Pitman, 1922), and two books in vocational series, "The Private Secretary," by E. J. Kilduff (Century, 1924), and "The Training of a Secretary," by A. L. Church (Lippincott, 1922), both presenting the duties and opportunities of the profession. The latter manual includes information not only for secretaries of business enterprises, but for those of clubs and other organizations.

H. C. B., New York, asks for novels—not translations from the French—with the scene in Paris.

SO many good Americans have gone to Paris in print that I must keep this list to the more recent romances. Of these I find Ethel Mannin's "Pilgrims" (Doran), the most important; the central figure is a Dutchman, an artist of the sur-sur-realist type, or whatever is the word for an individualist painting for the day after tomorrow. But he is a genuine artist, and his spiritual and financial struggles are against a background of those curious non-producing painters who complicate life on the left bank, and whose importance to art or to anything else is about that of an ex-assistant bookkeeper in a delicatessen shop. A grade below this are the people in Ernest Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises" (Scribner). Wyndham Lewis's "Tarr" (Knopf), a novel of artist life ten years old, has recently been reprinted by Knopf; Nancy Hoyt's "Roundabout" takes its name from the street-carrousels figuring in local fairs. "The Lingering Faun," by Mabel Wood Martin (Stokes), is about the upset and feverish post-war Paris, with an American girl married to a Russian prince. "These Frantic Years," by Warner Bellah (Appleton), begins on the Riviera, then goes to New York, then to Paris. I have not read Harold Loeb's "The Professors Like Vodka" (Boni & Liveright), but according to the description the professors are American and meet their fates in a Czarist café in Paris. "The Rat" (Doran), is novelized by Phyllis Bottome from Ivor Novello's play of that name; it is the stage Apache, and off the stage he loses his breath. "Morning, Noon, and Night," by Kenneth Phillips Britton (E. V. Mitchell), tells about a lady who goes to Paris to get back her lost youth: it is a very young book—nothing marks the age of a writer more accurately than his idea of the age-limit on enjoyment. "A Fiddle for Eighteen Pence," by Sybil Ryall (Doran), begins in Paris but soon takes to the open road and romance. "Mr. and Mrs. Haddock in Paris," by Donald Ogden Stewart (Doran), and Homer Croy's "They Had to See Paris" (Harper), display the travelling American family as it is supposed to be when it is funny.

"On the Slope of Montmartre," by William Wallace Irwin (Stokes), is a series of brief and illuminating sketches of life as it is really lived among the self-respecting, self-supporting inhabitants of this sacred ground—for no matter how many penny-catching parasites may taint its air with electric signs and jazz bands, so long as there live on this high land young people—and old ones too—who will quietly go hungry and cold for the sake of art, the place will be still a Mount of Martyrs. I know plenty of them doing just this at this moment, and glad of the chance to do it; they do not get into the papers, but they work in Paris. Mr. Irwin, by the way, is not a composite of the Irwin brothers, William and Wallace; he was born that way.

W. A. C., a valued collaborator of the Guide in Kingston, Jamaica, asks me to tell two citizens of this island, soon coming to this city on a visit, what book will "give them an idea of your city, open sesame to its charms, its mystery, its barbaric splendor; such a book—and this will let you know exactly what I have in mind—as Chris Morley might write."

THE best book is "That's New York!" by Morris Markey (Macy-Masius). This may not please the aborigines of this town—although, come to think of it, I am one of these, and it pleases me—but there can be no doubt that it catches and passes on something of the distinctive spirit of the city at this moment, not only in its grandiose aspects but in its nervous intensity of action. Along with this I would by all means take "New Backgrounds for a New Age," by Edwin Avery Park (Harcourt, Brace), a surprising survey of architecture, arts and crafts, advertisements, fabrics—all the extraordinary evidences that art is alive in this city and screaming at the top of its lungs to be heard over the din of traffic. The book is not concerned altogether with New York, but it centers here; I am pleased to find that I have been in the movement without knowing it; the only restaurant that I frequent with anything like regularity—save for the one across the street from my home—is the only one whose decorations get two sets of pictures.

These visitors should keep in touch with the magazine *The New Yorker;* it has the same relation to New York that *Punch* has to London. This is one of the reasons why some New Yorkers go to London.

H. G., New York, asks for books that would tell him the conditions of standing timber in South America.

THIS can be best obtained from "Forest Resources of the World," two volumes by Zon and Sparhawk (McGraw-Hill). This gives not only the information, but also a detailed bibliography of value for further study.

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The AMEN CORNER

THE OXONIAN realizes his own arrant incapacity to distinguish between verses which are (as William Webbe put it) "meere Poeticall, or which tend in some respecte (as either in matter or forme) to be Poetry." Hence he offers not without trepidation these petty vandalisms and light-hearted ravages upon the poetry of a more creative past. From time to time these lisping numbers and purposeful parodies have found their way to the Oxonian's desk. Whether the offender be Pamela's Latest Victim, who takes this doubtful course to his lady's favor, or whether the Publisher's Young Man be the culprit, the Oxonian cannot say. At any rate, although these pillaged verses condemn themselves sufficiently unaided, they show what fantastic contortions June may wreak upon a youthful mind.

Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To *Modern English Usage* I fly.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As thou too shalt adore.
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not Fowler more!(1)

Sumer is icumen in,
Loud sing cuckoo!
Cometh flowers, and pretty bookes,
From Oxford to you—
Sing cuckoo!

This by our own Daisy Ashford!

When mothers chide and fathers curse
There's still the Oxford Book of English Verse.
When I seek refuge from my woes,
I turn to ditto English Prose!(2)

Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phoebus 'gins arise,
By reading of our catalogue
His mind to Oxford - ize!(3)

Take, O take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn,
But my Fowler bring again,
Bring again;
It promises less fickle joys,
And greater gain.(1)

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude.
Who borrowed *Eighteenth Century Verse*,
And left me all forlorn.
Heigh ho! sing, heigh ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly!(4)

I sent thee late a *Rasselas*,
Not so much honouring thee
As giving it in hope that there
It could not wasted be;
But thou therein didst only glance,
And send'st it back to me;
Since when, thou fool, thou'lt get, I swear,
No more good books from me!(5)

I dare not ask a kiss,
I dare not beg a smile,
Lest having that, or this,
I might grow proud the while.

No, no, the utmost share
Of my desire shall be
That you shall give me back
Croce's Biography!(6)

In the hour of my distress,
When temptations me oppress,
And when I my sins confess,
Sweet Victorians, comfort me!(7)

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
I do regret those wasted moments when I went.
Without the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary* for my guide.(8)

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—and I was sober when I swore!
And then came Fowler, and behold!
My former errors have appeared no more.(1)

All the words that I utter,
And all the words that I write,
Are dissected by Krapp and Van Santvoord,
Whose wisdom gives me a fright!(8)

With malice toward none, and apologies to all!

—THE OXONIAN.

(1) Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage, cloth $3.00, India $4.00. (2) Oxford Books of English Verse and Prose, cloth $3.75, India $4.25, and in leather. (3) Oxford Complete Catalogue (ready July 1). (4) Oxford Book of 18th Century Verse, cloth $3.75, India paper $4.25. (5) Rasselas, ready soon, about $3.00. (6) Imitation vellum, $1.75. (7) Oxford Book of Victorian Verse, cloth $3.75, India paper $4.25. (8) Pocket Oxford Dictionary, American Edition, $2.00.

The Phoenix Nest

WELL, as promised, here is our second Ferocious Sonnet number. As we look over the material we again humbly salaam to *Mr. Leonard Doughty*, of Austin, Texas, who has gone to the trouble of copying out many sonnets by the great of other years and sending in these and others of his own thick as leaves on Vallombrosa. If a book of ferocious sonnets is ever compiled with our assistance we shall certainly see that Mr. Doughty's name is upon it and that he inherits a major portion of whatever royalties may accrue. But we have so much work on our hands at present that such a book must wait. Meanwhile, we can print but several of his, in order to give others a chance, but he may be assured that all of his sending will be consigned safely to our grateful file, to be resurrected in a happier time. . . .

Meanwhile, we may mention that Mr. Doughty has reminded us of various sonnets of *Lord Alfred Douglas;* but as we are not sure whether we could avoid difficulties by quoting them, we do not do so. He has also, as Procrustes, keeper of the tavern, rather daringly experimented with making a sonnet of a part of No. IX of *Housman's* "Last Poems," using literally his words and making an alexandrine of the last line. But this we canot quite allow. Likewise he charges us by our soul's repose not to forget *Sir William Watson's* "Year of Shame." We shall not, if the book ever comes to a book, but meanwhile must. And now, to choose from his plenty; here is a sonnet of *Sidney Dobell's* that may not be too familiar to you:

LIBERTY TO M. LE DIPLOMATE

Thou fool who treatest with the sword, and not
With the strong arm that wields it! Thou insane
Who seest the dewdrops on the lion's mane,
But dost forget the lion! Oh thou sot,
Hugging thy drunken dream! Thou idiot
Who makes a covenant against the rain
With autumn leaves! Thou atheist who dost chain
This miserable body that can rot,
And thinkest it Me! Fool! for the swordless arm
Shall strike thee dead. Madman, the lion wakes,
And with one shake is dry. Sot, the day breaks
Shall sober even thee. Idiot, one storm
And thou art bare. Atheist, the corpse is thine,
But lo, the unfettered soul immortal and divine!

And so to two parody-sonnets of Doughty's own, but attributed to the diary of Algernon Imperial Wordstoburn, whence they are wrenched, with the motto

. . . Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
Nescio: sed fieri sentio. . . .
Catullus, *Carmen* 85.

I

AD AMICOS

God strike me dead, if I unhate my hates;
Hate is my livery and my heart's red sign;
I said to Hate, O Master, be thou mine;
Thine am I, as when Plague with Earthquake mates;
Fling open wide thy loved infernal gates,
And shut me in forever. . . . Thou benign
High god of my heart's worship! here I pine
In a void world where vapid friendship prates.

My soul is mad with love of thee, O Hate;
My heart is Hell with hate of thee, O Love;
I rage, that there are those who love me well.
O Master, burst these strangling bonds of fate;
Arm me with ruffian strength that I may shove
My lovers to the deepest depths of Hell.

II

AD COSMON

Damnation! Curse of God, and Devil's spite
Confound with Hell's confusion and dismay;
Be Death by night, and Horror's rage by day,
Forever and forever;—left and right,
Be tortuous, suffocating grip and bite
Of unseen ghouls and vampires, and the grey
And unclean lips that lick all life away—
Oh heart of hearts, breathe Murder day and night.
Turn devil, all ye gods of every age;
Turn blood, ye wandering waves of every sea;
Dove, insect, worm, and infant, rend and prey;
Roar, Silence; rise Corruption; Darkness, rage;
All earth and heaven and hell join in with me,
And slay, and slay, and slay, and slay and slay.

That last seems to us pretty whole-souled and satisfying! In fact it makes us supremely cheerful. Next, we append a new sonnet by *Leonard Bacon*, whose former contribution to this douce and gentle gallery is well-remembered:

SONNET WRITTEN DURING A STOMACH-ACHE

Thank God I am light-minded. I have had
The happy disposition to ignore
Nine-tenths of our contemporary lore
That makes the younger generation sad.
There's some good science and a lot of bad.
Most of our literature is just a bore.
Most of our art is piffle to the core.
That I know it is no reason to be glad.

Lightminded! There are things I could have died for.
But ere I die, let's say, for Bertrand Russell
The executioner will have to hustle.
I want a brave bright madness of the heart,
And not a blank-dashed theory (patent applied for)
Or a tortuous and intellectual art.

Mr. *Harvey C. Grumbine*, of Washington, D. C., has submitted a number of sonnets to us. The one we like the most is:

WHY OLD MEN ARE IMMORAL?

The things one runs away from half in fear
Of danger to one's moral rectitude,
And half (the deadlier half) in fear of rude
Behavior from boors who squeeze a tear
For one's undying soul's sake with a leer
Quite late Victorian, as of a prude
Prying into a keyhole at some crude
Naughtiness,—matter less as age draws near.
They matter less when time has come and laid
An equalizing hand on high and low,
On rich and poor, the fair, the strong, the weak;
For, seeing naught of which to be afraid
Save stiffened joints and blood congealed to snow,
Age warms at Beauty's breast its shrivelled cheek.

And the following, which we have been compelled somewhat to amend in its inception, comes from *David S. Oakes*, of Decatur, Illinois:

TO A GUEST TOWEL

Forbidding freshness of unearthly white,
Folded and fringed and bristling starchier
Than ought save evening's bosom-shirts,—to stir
Whose creases sharp and folds too smooth and tight
Were sacrilege, to soil whose monogram
Were desecration at a vandal's hand,
E'en though the host's or hostess' gesture grand
Would have one think it mattered not a damn,—
Gladly forbear these toil-stained palms of mine
To smirch your virgin snow! I leave you fast,
Unsought, unsullied, pure forever more,
To end your vestal life's conceived design:
And seek behind the door, as in the past,
The humble Turkish, damp from hands of yore.

And last, but not least, this from *E. H. Burr*, of Toronto, Canada:

O SOLOMON, O SINCLAIR!

O Solomon, think you that you were wise
To breathe that one impassioned Song of yours?
The fleshly flavor of your love endures
Wherever pagan hearts idolatrize.
A king by palimpsest could subsidize
And circulate libidinous brochures
Among a chosen few; the simon-pures
Reject such fervor with averted eyes.

Successive genrations think they see
Just what your Hebrew imagery meant;
Walt Whitman read and then became so "free"
His broadening slowly down from precedent
Surpassed your transcendental lechery,
Now at its nadir in this Gantry gent.
. . . And so, farewell!

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The World of Rare Books

By FREDERICK M. HOPKINS

A. EDWARD NEWTON'S LIBRARY

SOMETIME ago A. Edward Newton, author of "The Amenities of Book Collecting," privately printed a brouchure on "My Library" for distribution among his friends. This article is reprinted in the current number of *The Bookman's Journal* with the author's consent. From this source we reprint the following paragraphs descriptive of the library of an author in whom all book collectors are interested:

"My library is a large and dignified room; the entrance to which is through a small vestibule which separates it from the rest of the house, which is not fireproof, whereas my library is, or at least is supposed to be. Opposite the entrance, over the fireplace, is a painting, the original of which is in the Platin-Moretus Museum at Antwerp. It represents Gutenberg standing by his printing press, showing a leaf of his famous Bible to an old-time scrivener. Leaning upon the press, in a careless attitude, is a young lad who shows an indifferent interest in the story—he has doubtless heard it before—that Gutenberg is telling his friend. The scrivener can scarcely believe his eyes: something which it would have taken the scrivener several days to produce, has appeared upon a sheet of white printing paper in less than a minute! Is it witchcraft? No. It is the birth of printing from movable types in Europe and I never look at this picture without thinking of my pleasant adventures with a Gutenberg Bible.

"The walls of my library are lined with books, as the walls of a library should be, except, on the east and west sides, they are pierced with windows; so that the room is cheerful and sunny practically throughout the day. On the left side is my most valuable possession, the portrait of Samuel Johnson by Sir Joshua Reynolds. It was painted for Dr. Taylor of Ashbourne, two years before the Doctor's death. It is a beautiful painting, and, as Amy Lowell once said, it explains as no other picture of Johnson ever does, why his friends loved him so. Below and on both sides is my Johnsonian collection, begun forty years ago.

"Over the door by which we enter is the original of a picture which is known as 'An Evening Party at Sir Joshua Reynolds.' It is a sketch rather than a painting, but is suggestive of the atmosphere of my library. Around a table are seated Reynolds, Burke, Garrick, Johnson, Goldsmith, and others who made up that immortal coterie.

"The left wall is largely devoted to my favorite authors: Dickens, Lamb, and Goldsmith; while in the corner are my Stevensons, Blakes, my colored plate and sporting books. In the opposite corner are my poets, my 'rare' books, my few but desirable manuscripts, and my Bibles; while in the display case, back of the couch, is a goodish collection of bindings.

"On the right hand side are my 'sets' and my fiction, from Defoe to Hardy, with the eighteenth century especially stressed. As I have said, my books have been collected upon no well matured plan, but as a lot they are not bad; and the gathering of them together has been the joy of my exceptionally busy life.

"At the end of the long, narrow passage which gives entrance to this room, is another fireproof room, known in the house as the 'old library.' It is full of the odds and ends that an acquisitive man gathers about him almost in spite of himself; prints, pictures, and books. This room is my playroom: in it I 'scissors and paste' my little papers together, kidding myself into the belief that I am an author. It holds my books of reference, my dictionaries, my bibliographies, and my book catalogues—which to the collector are a relaxation—as novels are to others. And in it accumulate the books of the moment, which we should buy even if we do not always read them. I suppose that in the back of my mind is the idea that as I am occasionally guilty of publishing a book, which others buy, I should take a dose of my own medicine.

"I have little respect for a collector who is not willing to back his judgment as to the value of a modern book. It is all very well to say, 'there is a sense of security in an old book which time has appraised for us,' but we, ourselves, should do a bit of appraising. We should not, as too many picture collectors do, buy names only, after others have made them famous. Good books are constantly coming out. Why did we wait fifty years before we began buying 'Moby Dick?' And if we are not wise enough to buy Mrs. Wharton's 'Ethan Frome,' and Kit Morley's 'Parnassus' when they come out, let us do so now,—and in each case pay fifteen dollars for our neglect. Suppose we blunder in buying a book, what difference does it make? Let us keep on buying until we get a good average."

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